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Ironic in conversational German: A linguistic approach

Barbe, Johanna Katharina, Ph.D.

Rice University, 1989

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119, Figure 2
120, Figure 3
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RICE UNIVERSITY

IRONY IN CONVERSATIONAL GERMAN:
A LINGUISTIC APPROACH

by

JOHANNA KATHARINA BARBE

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
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Irony in Conversational German:  
A Linguistic Approach  
Johanna Katharina Barbe

Abstract

This study examines irony predominantly as it appears in German spontaneous spoken discourse. The main data employed for the study are four conversational texts, each of which has a different irony content.

In Chapter One I survey the literature on irony in the fields of rhetoric, literature, and literary criticism, as well as its treatment in linguistic frameworks (based on Austin 1962/1975, Searle 1969). I then compare the function and use of irony in German spontaneous conversation with counterparts in pre-composed conversation. In Chapter Three I discuss some uses of irony in non-Western cultures as contrasted with the functions of irony in modern German culture. Irony emerges as a mode of experience that is closely related to the culture of its inception. This aspect of irony is particularly evident in the difficulties encountered in the internal translation (paraphrase) of ironic discourse (pre-composed as well as spontaneous) or translation from one language or culture to another. In Chapter Four I examine difficulties in translation of instances of irony. Finally, in Chapter Five I distinguish irony from related tropes and concepts.

Irony employs a feature of duality, which has usually been associated with opposition. I have expanded the concept
of opposition and added the feature of multilayeredness as a necessary condition. Irony is seen here for the most part as an intended incongruence. A pair of readings co-exist, producing the incongruence. Both remain present in an interactive way.

I conclude that irony, even though extensively studied and described, remains resistant to precise definition and demarcation. Irony is not only employed as a nonce phenomenon at the propositional level, it can also function as a pervasive feature of discourse, a lifetime, an era, or even of life itself.
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Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................. iii
Acknowledgements ...................................................... v
Table of Content ....................................................... vi
PREFACE ....................................................................... ix

Chapter

1. SURVEY OF TREATMENTS OF IRONY ......................... 1
   1.1 Introduction .................................................. 1
   1.2 The concept of irony ....................................... 3
       1.2.1 Irony as a rhetorical device ..................... 3
       1.2.2 Irony and the German Romantics
             up to Kierkegaard ................................ 8
       1.2.3 Modern treatments of irony ................. 13
   1.2.4 Types of irony ......................................... 17
   1.2.5 Linguistic frameworks ............................ 26
   1.3 Conclusion .................................................. 37

2. IRONY IN SPONTANEOUS CONVERSATION ................... 41
   2.1 Introduction .............................................. 41
   2.2 Analysis of perceived ironic exchanges .......... 44
       2.2.1 Text A ............................................. 44
       2.2.2 Text B -- The Party Text .................... 50
       2.2.3 Text C ............................................. 78
       2.2.4 Text D ............................................. 82
   2.3 Discussion ................................................ 84
   2.3.1 Types of irony as determined
         by the context ....................................... 84
2.3.2 Signals of irony ..........................90
2.4 Conclusion ...............................99

3. IRONY IN THE CONTEXT OF CULTURE .................101
3.1 Introduction ................................101
3.2 Irony in non-western cultures ...............103
3.2.1 Amharic ................................103
3.2.2 Fiji Indians ..............................105
3.2.3 Wana ..................................106
3.2.4 Namoizamanga ..........................108
3.2.5 Mangalese ...............................109
3.2.6 Ilongot ................................110
3.2.7 Discussion ..............................111
3.3 Some major functions of
of irony in German culture ....................115
3.3.1 Discussion ..............................126
3.4 Conclusion ...............................129

4. IRONY IN TRANSLATION ..........................130
4.1 Introduction ...............................130
4.2 On Translation .............................132
4.3 Translation of Texts A, B, C,
and D into English ...........................141
4.3.1 Text A ................................142
4.3.2 Text B ................................146
4.3.3 Text C ................................157
4.3.4 Text D ................................158
4.4 Discussion ...............................159
4.5 Conclusion ...............................161
5. IRONY AND RELATED PHENOMENA ..................163
   5.1 Introduction ...................................163
   5.2 Discussion ....................................163
   5.2.1 Metaphor ..................................163
   5.2.2 Puns .......................................167
   5.2.3 Parody .....................................170
   5.2.4 Satire .....................................172
   5.2.5 Jokes ......................................176
   5.2.6 Lies .......................................190
   5.3 Conclusion ....................................193

6. CONCLUSION .......................................196

APPENDIX ........................................199
   Appendix A ......................................200
   Appendix B ......................................203
   Appendix B. Translations to Text B ..........219
   Appendix C ......................................223
   Appendix D ......................................229
   Appendix E ......................................231

REFERENCES .......................................234
PREFACE

My intent here is to discuss irony in its relation to spoken German. I will also be concerned with the place of irony in within general linguistics. Irony is, of course, not only a language phenomenon, but also has its role in photography; or in art, for example, in the works by the late Joseph Beuys (cf. Hill 1988). Also music employs irony, as can be seen, for example, in some of the compositions by György Ligeti and John Cage. Elements of irony thus find expression in a variety of modalities. Irony as a broader concept could well as a potential property of semiotic systems in general. We will leave this claim, however, to be investigated at a later time.

Here I am most concerned with the role and function of irony in spontaneous speech in German. Clyne (1979, 1984) has claimed that Germans use verbal irony only to a very limited extent. He also claims that the employment of understatement for ironic purposes is particularly rare. And, furthermore, in comparison with English-speaking children, German-speaking children supposedly do not use word games and rhymes. Thus he concludes that Germans have a more prescriptive attitude towards language, and set a limit on

the usage of verbal humor and verbal irony in everyday discourse. ... Verbal humor and verbal irony are, at best, the province of creative writers (including journalists of
such periodicals as *Der Spiegel* and *Die Zeit*) and cabarettists (Clyne 1984:123).

Although the ability to appreciate verbal irony may not imply an ability to produce it, as we will see in the following discussion, Germans do indeed know how to use verbal irony. As for understatement: I remember that years ago in Darmstadt, Germany, a cousin of mine, at that time about six years old, fell several meters down a relatively steep path, rolled over, got up, and said, "Reinah hinnefallen!" ('almost fell down') -- surely an understatement.

Clyne bases all of his conclusions on a 1979 study of foreign born immigrants to Australia, among them Germans. The study was conducted in English, although the test subjects were not native speakers of English. As we will suggest later, foreign language humor, irony, and the like are the last, and also most difficult, hurdle in achieving near native-speaker fluency.

In Chapter One, I discuss the literature on irony in the fields of rhetoric, literature, and literary criticism, as well as its description in linguistic frameworks. In Chapter Two, I discuss the function and use of irony in German spontaneous conversation and compare them with counterparts in pre-composed conversation. In Chapter Three, I survey some uses of irony in non-Western cultures as contrasted with the functions of irony in modern German
culture. Irony emerges as a mode of experience that is closely related to the culture of its inception. This aspect of irony is particularly evident in the difficulties encountered in the internal translation (paraphrase) of ironic discourse (pre-composed as well as spontaneous) or translation from one language or culture to another. Such difficulties in translation of instances of irony are treated in Chapter Four. Chapter Five differentiates irony from related tropes and concepts.

Language has often been looked at as if it were an animated movie, consisting of a large number of frames. Each frame pictures a state. Put in sequence, however, the frames give us the illusion of movement. Linguists attempt to identify these frames. As Hopper (1987) observes, many linguists would claim that we should not analyze discourse before we have successfully described all of the sentences of a language. Even in discourse-linguistics the belief persists that 'structure pre-exists discourse' (Hopper 1987:141). Friedrich (1979:449) contends that

the cognitive, basic-meaning approach ... tends to lead research toward the study of fixed structures, toward stasis, rather than toward realization that language is partly chaotic as well as systematic in its sources and dynamics, that language is ultimately a question of flux and process.

The linguistic system does not exist apart from the speaker. Models of language need not be prescriptive or productive but rather descriptive. Hopper considers it the
'linguist's task ... to study the whole range of repetition in discourse, and in doing so to seek out those regularities which promise interest as insipid subsystems' (ibid. 142). Idioms, proverbs, cliches, formulas, for example, constitute 'case(s) of repetition in discourse' (ibid. 144). There exists no consistent level on which these regularities can be stated; hence, they have to be looked at holistically.

Grammar does not exist before discourse, because 'in natural discourse we compose and speak simultaneously ... Grammar is ... not ... the only, or ... major, source of regularity, but instead grammar is what results when formulas are re-arranged, or dismantled and re-assembled, in different ways' (ibid. 145). Hence, Hopper proposes 'to identify recurrent strategies for building discourses' (ibid. 148), referring to his approach as Emergent Grammar.

I agree with Hopper. Any structure, any apparent regularity emerges from the discourse; it is not pressed upon it like a template. The linguistic system is not something 'in which "exceptional" phenomena must be set aside as inconvenient irregularities' (ibid. 147). Stable features in grammar -- and they do exist -- may not form the sole basis of a grammar.

Brenneis (1987:499) states that the 'meaning (which) can only be determined by going beyond the literal, further suggests the limits of some traditional approaches to language.' As he would have predicted, I soon reached the
limits of existing models of language in my attempts to
describe irony. Such models do not yet account well for
language change, for cultural influences and influences of
other languages, for aesthetics, for the phenomenon of
language play, or even, for fun with the diversity of
language.

Generative linguistics uses an approach to language
which 'necessitates the mastering of a technique per se
before one can analyse a language' (Cummings 1988:8).
Consequently, the more a linguistic treatment resembles an
approach to mathematics, the more acceptable it becomes.
Generative linguistics has tried in this way to find its
niche among the sciences and is thus not set up to deal well
with figurative language.

Only very few linguistic models have been used to deal
with irony. The Speech Act Theory of Austin (1962/75) and
Searle (1976), as well as the Gricean model (1975/1978) have
been employed by linguists and philosophers like Willer and
Groeben, Jorgensen, Stempel, and others in their treatments
of irony. I will introduce, criticize, and expand upon their
ideas throughout my presentation. I have tried to
characterize (1) irony in general and (2) instances of irony
in particular. I have, furthermore, tried to reorganize them
under one basic rubric, namely the idea of incongruence. The
term is used in several publications, e.g., Stempel 1976,
Willer and Groeben 1981, in a similar but more limited way.
My use of the term incongruence should be understood here as indicating a value-free divergence that coexists with the expected interpretation. Thus, I do not intend a simplistic 'irony-as-violation' interpretation.

Even though each instance of irony can only be taken in its own context (i.e., specifically), the feature of incongruence emerges in all of the instances (i.e., generally). Hence, all of the cited examples can be discussed from the perspective of my incongruence approach. However, I do not limit the notion of incongruence to the coexistence of two or more meanings of a linguistic expression, but expand the idea to account also for situational irony as well.¹

¹ My use of the term irony will normally refer to the phenomenon in general; individual instances of irony will be marked as plural (ironies) or by a determiner (the irony, an irony), etc.
Die Erlernung einer fremden Sprache sollte ... die Gewinnung eines neuen Standpunktes in der bisherigen Weltansicht sein, und ist es in der That bis auf einen gewissen Grad, da jede Sprache das ganze Gewebe der Begriffe und die Vorstellungsweise eines Theils der Menschheit enthält. Nur weil man in eine fremde Sprache immer, mehr oder weniger, seine eigene Sprachansicht hinüberträgt, so wird der Erfolg nicht rein und vollständig empfunden.

Eine Sprache in ihren ganzen Umfang enthält alles durch sie in Laute Verwandelt.

- WILHELM VON Humboldt
CHAPTER ONE. SURVEY OF TREATMENTS OF IRONY

1.1 Introduction

Many different kinds of irony have traditionally been distinguished in the literature. Some ironies 'have been named from the effect, others from the medium, others again from the technique, or the function or the object, or the practitioner, or the tone, or the attitude' (Muecke 1969:4). Classifications thus rest upon the approach taken and do not necessarily complement each other. And yet, a duality exemplified by incompatibility, tension, or elements of opposition unites all of the attempted definitions, so that 'the art of irony is (defined as) the art of saying something without really saying it' (ibid. 5).

Metaphor, symbol, myth, allegory, and ambiguity also play with the elements of such a duality. Whereas in these figures the duality can be seen to complement the meaning, the ironic duality expresses an instance of opposition of the meanings, of reality versus appearance.¹

As of now, irony has most often been examined either in the written context or as a device in rhetoric. With the passage of time the concept of irony has mutated in its

¹ About metaphor, cf. 5.2.1
application to rhetoric, art, poetry, prose, etc., and with it also the approach to it in the secondary literature.

We will retrace the path that the discussion of irony has taken in the literature. Following a brief examination of sources oriented towards rhetoric, like Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintillian, we will turn to the treatment of irony by Romantics, as exemplified by Friedrich Schlegel. The Romantics as well as later writers still view irony mainly as a rhetorical device, but are already moving towards the interpretation of irony in other art forms and, even broader, as a way of life. After the Romantic Period, Kierkegaard's treatise on irony brings on a new view. Booth (1974) and Muecke (1969, 1972) have published the most important recent works on irony.

Recently, the concept of irony has also been looked at from a linguistic point of view, and its characteristics in actual conversation have been described. Thus the literature on irony returns to its point of departure -- oral usage -- but in a different form. Initially described and treated prescriptively for usage in persuasive discourse (oral), irony subsequently becomes an issue as a figure or trope in poetry and prose (written), and now also as a figure of everyday speech (oral).²

² Here I describe pre-composed, written forms of irony, not actual spontaneous instances, which I will discuss in Chapter Two.
1.2 The concept of irony

1.2.1 Irony as a rhetorical device

The word 'irony' (Gk. ἡπωεία - saying or asking) denoted, before the Socratic dialogues, bragging or belittling with a negative connotation. Plato considered irony 'a sort of vulgar expression and reproach ... (meaning) sly, mocking pretense and deception' (Knox 1972:3) -- symbolized by the fox.

Since the time of Socrates, however, irony has undergone an elevation. Even though irony seems to be tied to Socrates, Socratic irony as a term came into use only later. Socrates practiced 'sarcastic praise and disingenuous self-deprecation' (Knox 1972:3).

Kierkegaard (in a 1929 translation) dedicates a major part of his controversial dissertation to the discussion of Socratic irony. He views Socrates as ignorant and without knowledge. Socrates constantly tries to gain knowledge through others, but he inevitably fails. In Kierkegaard's view, this Socratic ignorance enables the irony to render ironic any type of powerful interference in Socrates' life.

Sokrates hat durch seine Unwissenheit alle bedeutungsvolle Kommunikation mit dem Gedanken an den Tod verhindert. ... Sokrates weiß schlechterdings nichts, und insofern ist es

---

³ Plato did not call the Socratic way of conversation or discussion ironic.
Ironie gegenüber dem Staat, daß dieser ihn zum Tode verurteilt und damit ihn bestraft zu haben glaubt (Kierkegaard 1929:227).

Kierkegaard thus opposes Hegel, who saw Socratic irony as a particular form of conversation, in which one participant (e.g., Socrates or a follower) feigns ignorance in order to expose the ignorance of his interlocutors. Socratic irony denotes the discrepancy between appearance and an assumed reality and shares the element of duality with other types of irony.

In his Rhetoric, Aristotle uses duality to describe irony as a 'blame-by-praise and ... praise-by-blame' (Knox 1972:4) figure. Aristotle's definition of irony as 'saying something but meaning the opposite' still dominates current definitions. But irony can be more than a mere figure of speech. As an attitude, irony appears 'more gentlemanly than buffoonery, as the former is used simply for its own sake and the latter for some ulterior object' (Aristotle (Welldon 1886:301)). Aristotle's infrequent mentioning of irony, however, makes us believe that he did not consider irony to be a major rhetorical figure.5

In Cicero's writings, irony achieves more prominence and depth. Cicero, like Aristotle alludes to irony as an attitude when he distinguishes between 'irony as a mere

4 Cf. also Hass and Mohrlüder.

5 He does mention irony in his Poetics, namely the type known as dramatic irony.
figure of speech and as a pervasive habit of discourse' (Knox 1972:5). He expands the concept to cover not only saying the opposite but also saying something different. Thus irony misleads the hearer in all instances, unless the hearer has recourse to signals of irony. Only by recognizing the signals is the hearer able to discover the irony.

The juxtaposition of either conflicting words, actions, or words and actions yields irony. For example, 'anything disgraceful is designated by an honourable term ... (or) any part of another person's words (is taken) in a different sense from that which he intended' (Aristotle (Welldon 1886:302)). Thus, any kind of verbal ambiguity functions as an indicator for irony.

According to his translators Cicero used 'irony' and 'dissimulation' synonymously. This dual usage survived until the 17th century, when dissimulation came to be used 'for irony as real deception' (Knox 1972:12). The blame-by-praise method, though once very influential, becomes incorporated into the method of expressing irony by the 'contrary-to-what-has-been-said' statement, which expands the concept. In the course of time definitions of irony were subjected to semantic expansion and change.

As a rhetorical figure, irony can be found in any type of discourse. Irony is 'agreeable as well in grave as in humorous speeches' (Cicero (Watson 1855:299)). Thus it can be applied for humorous purposes. Quintilian agreed that
'such a practice is permissable when deliberately designed to raise a laugh' (Quintillian (Butler 1921-22:239)). Quintillian advised the use of certain figures for certain purposes and against other purposes. He realized that meiosis, which he considered an inadequacy of expression, when deliberately used, becomes a figure.

Quintillian also noticed elements of duality at play in the use of irony. He explains the duality in more detail by means of allegory,

in ... (allegory) the meaning is contrary to that suggested by the words, (to) involve an element of irony, or ... illusio. This is made evident either by the delivery, the character of the speaker or the nature of the subject (ibid. 333).

Allegory, disguises meanings, either by 'way of wit, or ... by saying exactly the contrary' (ibid. 333/335). Irony contributes to allegory as both a figure and a trope. 'For in the trope the conflict is purely verbal, while in the figure the meaning ... conflicts with the language and the tone of voice adopted' (ibid. 401). Tropes, smaller units (like metaphor, metonymy, etc.), develop into figures when appearing in succession. But not only in the realm of allegory but also in general irony belongs both to figure and trope, as expressed by Behler (1972:25):^6

indem sie sich als Trope auf präzise Weise in nur zwei Worten bekunden kann, während sie als Figur einen durchgängigen Kontrast zwischen

---
^6 Behler 1972 is basically in agreement with the historical treatment of irony as presented here.
dem Gesagten und dem in Wirklichkeit in der Rede Gemeinten schafft.

The actual application of irony had not been described accurately. Quintillian argued that irony

is made evident to the understanding either by the delivery ..., the character of the speaker or the nature of the subject. For if any of these three is out of keeping with the words, it at once becomes clear that the intention of the speaker is other than what he actually says (Booth 1974:49).

In summary, Quintillian proposes the use of irony (as a figure or trope) in oratory in order to conceal hidden meanings or motives. Quintillian, together with his predecessors Aristotle and Cicero, set the tone for subsequent rhetorical treatises on irony, and thus also influenced the treatment of irony in literature. In rhetoric the definition of irony remains essentially unchanged.

In the 15th century, the term irony appears in English as *yronye*, a term that would not prevail and which was ultimately abandoned in favor of the Greek-based version. Not until the early 18th century (with Defoe) does irony become 'common in the literary and general discourse of the day' (Knox 1972:8), though, with limited application. Prior to the Romantic period, scholarly discourse viewed irony predominantly as a rhetorical figure; it 'was only one

---

7 Irony, of course, had been used by writers, but had not been talked about as a literary figure.
rhetorical device among many, the least important of the rhetorical tropes' (Booth 1974.ix).

Autoren wie Diderot, Fielding, Voltaire and Sterne (wären) sehr überrascht gewesen, ... wenn sie vernommen hätten, wie bereitwillig wir ihre literarischen Werke als Ausdruck der Ironie interpretieren (Behler 1972:9).

In Britain in the 17th/18th century irony was used as a term covering mockery, derision, and understatement (litotes and meiosis) as well as in its classical rhetorical sense. The term and concept of irony leave room for interpretation. This is why irony also comes to be used for any type of non-serious, light discourse.

1.2.2 Irony and the German Romantics up to Kierkegaard

The rise of the Romantic period in Germany brought with it many changes in the concept of irony. For one, the focus of irony changes. As an elaboration of Cicero, irony comes to denote the way of 'speaking, writing, acting, behaving, painting, etc., in which the real or intended meaning presented or evoked is intentionally quite other than, and incompatible with, the ostensible or pretended meaning' (Muecke 1969:53). The Romantic ironist or artist or ironic artist creates a work of art to delight an audience. But this delight is deceiving, because she\(^8\) subsequently destroys the work's impact by depicting herself as the

\[\text{---}\

\(^8\) I am using 'she' as the generic pronoun.
creator and the work as something artificial, non-referential.

Thus irony becomes an artistic device in the Romantic period and forsakes its traditional place -- rhetoric. Friedrich Schlegel, a pioneering and influential Romantic philosopher, together with Schleiermacher, a translator of Plato, deals with Romantic irony by connecting Plato's ideas -- as exemplified by Socrates -- with his own very controversial ideas. He relates his philosophy of history (Geschichtsphilosophie) closely to his interpretation of Romantic irony. We can identify a three-part division in the 'klassische Antike, das reflektierte Leiden der Moderne, (und) die Hoffnung auf das kommende Reich Gottes' (Schlegel (Hass and Mohrlüder 1973:154)), comparable to past, present, and future. Man, conscious of himself and of the chaos in which he has to live, realizes that his quest for unity and infinity (Unendlichkeit) cannot be successful, because of his inability to act.

Was als Ironie bezeichnet wird, ist (der) ... Versuch, seine (des Menschen) kritische Lage durch Abstandnahme und Umwertung auszuhalten. ... Die Annahme der eigenen Unfähigkeit verbietet dem Ironiker die Achtung vor dem dennoch Vollbrachten, ... (da) er durch diese Annahme den Weg der Vollendung sich selber verbaut ... bildet (sie) seine Tragik' (ibid. 156/157).

On an existential level, irony persists throughout a man's life, thus making life thoroughly tragic. Much of the romantic symbolism, like the darkness or infinity, most
probably finds its source in the tragic confinement of the romantic artist.

Romantic irony deals 'with the ironic contradiction of art, ... (i.e., a) recognition of the fact that the world in its essence is paradoxical and that an ambivalent attitude alone can grasp its contradictory totality' (Muecke 1969:159). Thus any work of art exists on two levels, the real and the imaginative. It has to recognize its own limitations. Art should just represent art and not an illusion of reality.

The emerging use of dissonance in music signifies in a different art form 'the romantic hero's sense of being out of harmony with nature, with society and with himself' (ibid. 189). Giving the spectator, reader, or hearer an illusion of harmony, only to destroy it by dissonance, appears to be the essence of Romantic irony. Thus the 'Romantic achievement is seen as a shift of irony from a rhetorical device in the text to a characterization of its process of creation, hence of the artist's mind itself' (Handwerk 1985:5).

Kierkegaard's dissertation (translated 1929) has often been considered a refutation of the Romantic idea. He recognized that everybody defines irony according to his own line of work (i.e., in poetry, prose, etc.), and that 'der Begriff der Ironic solchermaßen oft eine verschiedene Bedeutung erhalten hat' (Kierkegaard 1929:204). However, all
the different meanings that irony came to acquire with time, co-exist and complement each other. Features of opposition, and also duality, characterize the figure of irony, 'daβ nämlich das Phänomen nicht das Wesen ist, sondern das Gegenteil des Wesens' (ibid. 206).

Kierkegaard views any particular reality as time and generation-bound. A new reality supercedes the old reality. In the transition between the old and the new reality 'muβ das Alte in seiner ganzen Unvollkommenheit gesehen werden. Hier treffen wir das ironische Subjekt. Für das ironische Subjekt hat die gegebene Wirklichkeit ihre Gültigkeit völlig verloren' (ibid. 218). So the ironist becomes the one who conducts the transition between the conflicting realities.

Der Ironiker ... ist aus den Reihen der Umwelt herausgetreten und hat Front gegen sie gemacht. Das, was kommen soll, ist ihm verborgen, liegt hinter seinem Rücken, aber die Wirklichkeit, der er sich feindlich gegenübergestellt hat, ist das, was er vernichten soll' (ibid. 218).

This observation, obviously in contrast to our "future-happiness", considers only those persons ironic who struggle against the present, as this constitutes the only opponent left to fight. We cannot fight the future, because we do not know what the future may bring.

Both Cicero and Friedrich von Schlegel recognized the intrusion of irony on an individual's life but to differing degrees in different areas. Kierkegaard laments the loss of the ironist whom he characterizes by 'das feine,
bedeutungsvolle, zweideutig soviel verratene Lächeln' (ibid. 205). Kierkegaard is thus closer to Cicero's ironist who declared the usage of irony his way of life. Schlegel's ironist, on the other hand, recognizes through irony the limitations of his existence and the futility of his ambitions and endeavors.

Irony thus becomes the eternal absolute negativity. Throughout a lifetime, the justification or validity of irony cannot be judged. The ironist has neither the power nor the knowledge to do so. But having knowledge of the past, one can judge the irony that preceded. Thus each irony also deceives its maker. In this way, 'world irony' (Weltironie) 'läßt das Bestehende bestehen, aber billigt ihm keine Gültigkeit mehr zu' (Hass and Mohrlüder 1973:353), but nevertheless pretends to its validity and, therefore, leads to destruction. Socrates' irony exemplifies Kierkegaard's claim. Socrates' knowledge did not have any content and consequently renders his Unwissenheit ironic, negating not reality but a given reality.

Furthermore, Kierkegaard views irony -- just as his Roman predecessors -- as a figure of speech, i.e., its use in everyday life. He distinguishes irony as a way of life from private irony. Used against others to emphasize their flaws, only the ironist enjoys private irony, as only he notices it. Moreover, directed against those, who are interested, irony becomes a defense mechanism. Irony finds
further use as a means to an end by those in power. Kierkegaard reports that the Catholic Church, for example, makes a fool of itself from time to time (e.g., in costume plays). That subordinates are allowed to criticize the institution has the effect of alleviating potential discontent.

Kierkegaard's work exemplifies the transition towards the concept of irony emerging in the 20th century. In the 20th century, the main discussion revolves around irony as a literary figure.Comparatively few publications deal with the signals of irony in the text, in the spoken language, i.e., adopt a more linguistic perspective.

1.2.3 Modern treatments of irony

Muecke differentiates three grades of irony: overt, covert, and private. In an ironic situation both speaker and hearer participate actively in overt irony but at different points. The speaker produces the irony intentionally, and the hearer decodes it easily. Not much detection work has to be done for these obvious instances of irony. The ease of detection, of course, renders the irony less effective. These are the ironies that turn into stock phrases, like 'go on, you must be kidding' -- as discussed below.

Covert irony, just like overt irony, has to be noticed by the hearer(s) in order to function as irony. But it can only be detected after the fact. This is why Muecke
considers expectation a further basic aspect of irony. When certain expectations fail to be met, the lack of awareness of this failure can lead to ironic situations. An irony cannot succeed when the hearer and a possible third person, i.e., an observer or audience, does not notice the irony, unless the speaker uses irony only for her own amusement (private irony).

Private irony 'is not intended to be perceived either by the victim or anyone else' (Muecke 1969:59). Only the ironist chuckles. This type of irony -- often also considered destructive -- comes very close to lying, but irony does not deal with right or wrong. Nevertheless, private irony, not detected by anybody but the speaker herself, can lead to a cover-up of the truth value of the utterance, even more so, as the speaker does not send any signals about the truth value of an utterance.

Like Muecke, Booth approaches irony from a literary, descriptive point of view. Irony can potentially be used in any literary genre, spoken or written. It marks the author-reader, speaker-hearer relationship. Booth contends that irony -- despite its recent prominence in discussion -- has not been satisfactorily treated. Usually irony 'undermines clarities, opens up vistas of chaos, and either liberates by destroying all dogma or destroys by revealing the inescapable canker of negation at the heart of every affirmation' (Booth 1974.ix).
Booth differentiates between stable and unstable irony, corresponding remotely to Muecke's overt and covert irony. An author, Booth contends, while using stable irony intends just one underlying meaning, even though others can also be reconstructed. She wants to have a say in the way the interpretation turns out. She achieves influence on the interpretation of her work by conventionalizing meanings and thus she tries to limit the reader's choice. Unstable irony, on the other hand, permits the reader to be imaginative and thereby destroys its own making and leaves the reader with nothing. Unstable irony self-destructs.

Stable irony provides the reader with a feeling of accomplishment and solidarity with the writer, 'the author I infer behind the false words is my kind of man, because he enjoys playing with irony, because he assumes my capacity for dealing with it, and ... because he grants me a kind of wisdom' (Booth 1974:28). Ironic statements have more force, because they need to be detected by the audience. The problem for this whole endeavor lies here: ironies are easy to detect but often difficult to reconstruct. Here the reconstruction proves an 'aggressively intellectual exercise that fuses fact and value' (ibid. 44), which either succeeds or not. If the reader does not notice the irony, she loses nothing.

Following this line of argument, Booth provides clues for the detection of irony. He mentions, for example,
warnings in the author's own words (cf. p. 53 ff.), which can appear in titles, epigraphs or prefaces. He uses that very technique himself, prefacing every chapter with a number of suitable quotations. Detecting absurd statements, like the violation of popular expressions or historical facts (whatever that might be), the reader should be aware that they can constitute signs of irony (cf. p. 57). Furthermore, clashes of style and inconsistencies of facts within a work can warrant an ironic interpretation (cf. p. 67). And, finally, conflicts of belief between author and reader often force a misreading, because 'taking straight talk for irony, is most probable where an author's beliefs differ most from the reader's' (ibid. 81).

Thus the reader has to have recourse to alternative explanations to test the supposed irony content. Booth proposes a four-step reconstruction, including (1) rejection of the literal meaning, (2) alternative interpretation, (3) knowledge of the author's belief and juxtaposition of those with the text, (4) decision on the interpretation of the text (cf. Booth 1972:11 ff.). As we will see later, this checklist can also be used as a basis for the interpretation of irony in spoken language.

The reconstruction, then, opens the field to varied interpretations. Readers will not agree on one single interpretation. 'Ignorance, Inability to Pay Attention, Prejudice, Lack of Practice, and Emotional Inadequacy'
(ibid. 222) can hinder the recognition of irony. Ironies leave a lot of latitude for different interpretations as 'nothing in (a) work itself requires (agreement)' (ibid. 19).

In summary, Muecke as well as Booth describe irony in the written word and work. Theirs is not a linguistic treatment, and they do not make that claim. They deliberately do not define irony, but only describe it. 'Since ... Erich Heller, in his *Ironic German*, has already quite adequately not defined irony, there would be little point in not defining it all over again' (Muecke in Booth 1972:xviii).

Thus, Muecke and also Booth write in a literary framework, which traditionally considers several different types of irony according to participant relationships and extended context. This classification of irony and its participants will be elaborated at this point before we return to survey linguistically oriented treatments of irony.

1.2.4 Types of irony

Types of ironies have been distinguished for use in rhetoric and for the purpose of literary interpretation. Let us first consider the types of irony that are found in
Abrams (1975) and other basic works on literary terminology.⁹

Ironies can be inherently either more language-related (verbal irony) or more situation-oriented (situational irony). Verbal irony intends a second (or third, fourth, etc.) reading or understanding -- a reading between the lines, so to speak. It requires knowledge of the context in order to be discovered. Specific cues appear in the text to set off an ironic interpretation. An observer, but not necessarily the victim, recognizes the speaker's intention. If, for example, you say to a friend das hast du aber schön gemacht! after he has accidentally broken your favorite coffee-mug, this statement will not have the effect of praise but rather of blame, and the clues for irony are found in the particular use of the language.¹⁰

Sarcasm, a type of verbal irony, is restricted to the 'crude and blatant use of apparent praise for dispraise' (Abrams 1971:82). 'The emphasis was ... on the "bitterness" of feeling displayed by a verbal attack' (Knox 1972:10). Sarcasm, because obvious, wants to be discovered, as, otherwise, it missed its turn.

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⁹ As will be observed, these reference works use different points of departure and their definitions will thus partly overlap.

¹⁰ In the discussion of irony, we will not be able to differentiate between necessary and sufficient conditions.
Socratic Irony is a type of verbal irony that denotes the irony found in the speaker's deceiving the hearer as to his (the speaker's) knowledge. The speaker feigns ignorance to lead the hearer to make incriminating (and simplistic) statements' (Abrams 1971:82)."  

Private Irony represents another type of verbal irony, in my schema a borderline case. A private ironist "commits" irony only for her own amusement. This irony should not be detectable in spoken discourse. But as it so often happens, spoken language, once written down, falls prey to all kinds of interpretations. Consequently, some literary figures have come to be called private ironists in retrospect. But once a participant recognizes such ironies, we can no longer consider them private, because, by definition, nobody but the ironist herself should be able to detect private irony; only the ironist produces, discovers, and enjoys the irony. A private irony can, of course, also cover the situation in which an intended irony has failed to be recognized and, therefore, to be effective.

Verbal Irony thus covers Sarcasm, Socratic Irony, and Private Irony. In the following sections, the situation or action-based types of irony will be described.

Dramatic Irony deals with the situation predominantly in the setting of a play. The ignorant protagonist does not

\[11\] But compare with Kierkegaard above.
recognize the problematic nature of her own role. Tragic Irony, a sub-type of dramatic irony, finds its prototypical example in Oedipus. Unknowingly, he curses himself and then actualizes the curse upon himself by exhibiting ignorance of his role. The audience, aware of this dilemma, helplessly observes him progressing towards his doom.

Only the reader/observer knows about the real situation in Structural Irony, also termed the dramatic irony of novels. Using a naive hero or fallible narrator, the author shares her intentions, unknown to the agent, with the audience.

Cosmic Irony or the irony of fate renders humans helpless. Destiny becomes personified and manipulates the powerless human in this irony of life. Only after its instantiation, i.e., after it has affected her, does the victim notice cosmic irony.\(^\text{12}\)

Romantic Irony can appear on an artistic level, i.e., connected with a particular work of art, and also on a more existential level. The romantic ironist as author or artist builds up an artistic illusion only to break it down by revealing her identity as the creator of the work.

The above mentioned types of irony fall into two main groups (Figure 1). The language-related or language-expressed ironies are grouped under the heading of Verbal

\(^{12}\) Cf. also Kierkegaard.
**Irony**, denoting any type of duality expressed just by means of language. This is not to say, that the ironies found under *Situational Ironies* do not have a relationship to language. The agents of the situational ironies, of course, use language. However, the situation, by means of setting and action, is juxtaposed to the agents' expressions, and thus contribute in a primary way to the irony.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal Irony</th>
<th>Situational Irony</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarcasm</td>
<td>Dramatic Irony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socratic Irony</td>
<td>Structural Irony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Irony</td>
<td>Cosmic Irony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Romantic Irony</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1**

A given type of irony has to be seen in relation to the participants involved in the ironic instances. For this reason, we will now have to examine the participant involvement and relate it to the types of irony identified above. Traditionally, two participants, i.e., the ironist and the victim have been assumed. But following Freud,\(^{13}\) we will include the audience as a third participant. Furthermore, an optional participant has been added in order to cover those cases in which author or maker of an irony is not identical with the speaker. The three or four roles can

\(^{13}\) And others before and after him.
thus function as primary entities in a classification of irony. We will thus identify the following participant distribution (Figure 2):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(P0)⁴</td>
<td>the speaker</td>
<td>the hearer</td>
<td>the observer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(maker, creator, author)</td>
<td>ironist</td>
<td>victim</td>
<td>audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>reader</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2**

In agreement with Nash (1985:19), I see the fundamental participant relationship as that between the 'executan: within-the-text' (here: P1) and 'respondent-within-the-text' (here: P2).¹⁵ Nash further assumes an executant (like author, poet, P0) and a respondent (reader, observer, censor, P3). Thus, the four participants will differ in their superficial relationships in terms of variations in the degree of their respective awareness of the irony.

The maker or author or entity of fate (Participant 0) lies outside of the realm of the other participants, she cannot be touched. She creates the irony and uses the other

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⁴ ( ) = optional

¹⁵ We are still talking primarily about the written medium, notice the term text.
participants for its realization. For P2 and P3 to understand P1 respectively P0, they need to know something about her background. Very specific information about an author is often inaccessible. Thus, the other participants have to deduce from the material read or heard what type of person they are dealing with.

We find the victim (P3) usually among the innocent or ignorant. Every form of irony requires a victim, even if the victim is the speaker herself or mankind as a whole. Muecke characterizes the victim as one who 'blindly assumes or asserts that something is or is not the case, or confidently expects something to happen or not to happen' (ibid. 30). The victim does not realize her predicament and the irony of it. In the ironic situation, the victim finds herself at the mercy of the speaker; she is the one the audience laughs about, the fallible narrator.

Finally, P3, the audience or the reader, constitutes an outside observer, not involved in the situation. Jokes are produced for her benefit and approval, as are ironies. P3 notices and evaluates the irony without being actively involved in the situation.

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16 In many instances, P1 conflates with P0, e.g., in the event that the producer and executor of an instance of irony are identical.

17 But compare to Socratic irony: Socrates chooses to be ignorant, i.e., he realizes that we can only be ignorant, and, hence, he is not a victim.
Figure 3 illustrates the connections of the participants with the above mentioned types of irony. Figure 4 further pictures the relationships by connecting the types and participants with the situations.

To summarize: in this classification, types of irony are determined by the relationships of the three or four participants to each other and with the situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>type of irony</th>
<th>(creator)</th>
<th>speaker</th>
<th>hearer</th>
<th>audience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>verbal</td>
<td></td>
<td>actor 1</td>
<td>actor 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td>+ =</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b)\textsuperscript{18}</td>
<td>+ =</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>private</td>
<td>+ =</td>
<td>+ =</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>= +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>situational</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a)\textsuperscript{19}</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b)\textsuperscript{20}</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cosmic</td>
<td>fate</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>(=)</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

+/- perception of irony 
() optional 
= coreferential participants

\textsuperscript{18} Also an instance of Socratic irony. 
\textsuperscript{19} Also dramatic or tragic irony. 
\textsuperscript{20} Unintended by executor but appearing as the result of some juxtaposition of incongruent circumstances.
Figure 4 further pictures the relationship by connecting the types of irony and the participants involved with the ironic situation.

- **structural**
  - 2
  - 3
  - △

- **dramatic**
  - 2
  - 3
  - △

- **cosmic**
  - △
  - 3
  - 1

- **private**
  - 1
  - 2

- **verbal**
  - 1
  - 2
  - △

- **Socratic**
  - 1
  - 2
  - △

- □ - producer
- ○ - victim
- △ - observer
- — — - ironic situation
- → - irony noticed by

Figure 4
1.2.5 Linguistic Frameworks

After the foregoing discussion of irony as a figure or trope in rhetoric and literature, I will now turn to an examination of a number of treatments of irony from the point of view of linguistics, predominantly following the Gricean model or Speech Act Theory.

Stempel (1976) bases his approach on both a discussion of Grice and Searle. He considers the classification of speech acts (cf. Austin 1962, Searle 1974) to be problematic. Irony can be located either under illocution or under perlocution. Speech acts used for ironic purposes are unconventional and not predetermined; we cannot give conditions under which irony is always successful. Stempel addresses here one of the major problems with Speech Act Theory, namely the difference between illocution and perlocution. This is precisely also Meggle's (1985) main criticism, who notes that the illocutionary force is pictured as part of the meaning whereas the perlocutionary force is not. Stempel, hence, strikes a compromise by extending irony's domain over both types of speech acts.

Irony as a speech act has a complex illocutive component...
The comic, however, has not been dealt with adequately in linguistics, Stempel contends. Linguistics has been too narrow in its treatment of semantic anomalies, mainly because it has neglected the context of situation and instead plunged into a chopping frenzy -- analysis by dissection. Following the traditional definitions of irony, Stempel believes that

bei einer ironischen Äußerung eine Sache durch ihr Gegenteil ausgedrückt wird ... (dies bedeutet), daß der Gegensatz sich auf der Ausdrucks- oder auf der Inhaltsebene konstituiert ... Im ersten Fall treten Wortlaut oder auch nur lautliche Qualitäten des Wortlauts (z.B. die Intonation), im zweiten der ausgedrückte Inhalt im Gegensatz zum eigentlich Gemeinten' (Stempel 1976:212).

Stempel sees the joke 'in vielen Fällen in Abhängigkeit, wenn nicht sogar als Funktion eines Grundmerkmals der Ironie' (ibid. 216). Following Freud, Stempel also uses a participant-triad for his purposes, namely, to explain and analyze irony, in a way analogous to the above. Thus, an instance of irony involves the speaker/ironist (P1), the hearer/victim (P2) and the audience/observer/evaluator (P3). In some instances, P3 conflates with P1. For Stempel an instance of irony does not necessarily require the presence of a victim, but each instance of irony takes a certain aim.\textsuperscript{22} P1 (the speaker)

\textsuperscript{21} Cf. 5.2.5

\textsuperscript{22} This aim might as well be termed victim, even if it is not a person.
tries to get P3 (the audience) on her side by appealing to feelings of solidarity. This approach, however, fails, when the audience expresses sympathy for the victim.

Stempel does indeed attempt to use a more linguistically oriented approach, but falls short of completeness by positioning irony in the relationship of the three participants. Stempel states that cooperative speakers and hearers have contracted to abide by Grice's maxims in order to conduct successful communication. By non-cooperation in the Gricean sense, a speaker shows her willingness to "commit" an irony. Grice views irony as 'die Ignorierung der Maxime der 'Qualität'" (ibid. 224). Irony does not deceive completely, because irony has to be noticed in order to be effective, even if the hearer does not expect it. However, '(die) Nichteinhaltung einzelner Gebote ... (bleibt) bei vollkommener Täuschung unbemerkt' (ibid.).

In my view, Grice's conversational maxims apply only to a relatively limited scope of conversations; and as analytic tools they prove only partially successful, since they are far too limited and also too limiting. As Grice (1975) argues, irony violates the maxims, particularly the maxim of quality, because it changes the truth value of a statement. In 'Logic and Conversation' (1975), he implies that there exists a preferred conversation characterized by brevity, adequate, and accurate information, for example. However,
experience tells us that such a conversational type only exists as an ideal.

Grice bases his maxims on the expectations shared by all participants. Expectations appear due to participants' experience with conversations in general, and prior interaction with the other participants in particular. The participants react at not having their expectations fulfilled. Participants do not generally agree on the aim and purpose of a conversation at all times. Imagine, for example, a conversation that one participant attempts to jeopardize at each turn by the use of irony. Such violations of the four maxims may occur at any time, not only for ironic purposes but also due to personal idiosyncracies, misunderstandings, awkwardness, and cultural differences.

Grice's maxims cannot adequately inform a discussion of a figure like irony, since he considers irony (along with other figures) to be a violation. In a 1978 paper Grice discusses irony more fully. He sees irony to be 'intimately connected with the expression of a feeling, attitude, or evaluation' (1978:124). The expression is of a negative nature and reflects a hostile or derogatory judgment. He considers irony used for a positive purpose, as exemplified by the blame-by-praise figure, a rather rare occurrence.

Grice, furthermore, proposes to explain irony by means of pretense. 'To be ironical is, among other things, to pretend ... and while one wants the pretense to be
recognized as such, to announce it as pretense (i.e., to speak ironically) would spoil the effect' (Grice 1978:125).

Kaufer (1981:501) takes up Grice's idea, which he judges 'inadequate insofar as it can do little more than illustrate how the overt violation of any cooperative maxim may or may not result in irony'. Nevertheless, using a Gricean basis for the interpretation of irony, namely, irony as pretense. Thus the ironist only pretends to assert a certain proposition and deliberately commits evaluative misapplication. Grice's irony-as-pretense influenced subsequent treatments of irony. On the basis of Grice's suggestions, Clark and Gerrig (1984) propose the utterance-based 'Pretense Theory of Irony'. The Pretense Theory was set up partly also in response to Sperber and Wilson's (1981 and 1984) 'Mention Theory of Irony', which is also utterance-based.

Pretense has traditionally always been a part of irony, Clark and Gerrig claim (cf. also early definitions of irony). The ironist pretends to be ignorant and slips into a new role. In this new role she also leaves behind her own voice in exchange for a new ironic voice. Thus the Pretense Theory claims that 'there is a natural account of the ironic tone of voice' (ibid. 123). With this new role, the ironist fools his victims. Pretense Theory assumes two types of victims. 'The first is ... the unseeing or injudicious person the ironist is pretending to be. The second is ...
the uncomprehending audience not in the inner circle' (ibid.). Thus the recognition of an instance of irony depends on the shared background-knowledge of its participants.

The Mention Theory is also based on the shared background knowledge but interprets this knowledge in a different way. Sperber and Wilson (1981) developed the Mention Theory in order to challenge the traditional approach. This theory was further developed by Jorgensen, Miller and Sperber who argued

> that the meaning expressed in an ironical utterance is the literal one and no other. However, this literal meaning is not used by speakers to convey their own thoughts. Rather, it is mentioned as an object of contempt, ridicule, or disapproval. Conversely, the task of the hearer is to reconstruct both the literal meanings of the utterance and the attitude of the speaker toward that meaning. (1984:112/113)

Jorgensen, et al., tested their theory by means of little vignettes, which can have an ironic reading, like the following

The party was at the Clarks', but Joe didn't know where Mr. Clark lived.

"It's on Lee Street," Irma told him. ["It's the house with the big maple tree on the front lawn.] You can't miss it."

But Joe did miss it. He never would have found it if Ken hadn't seen him wandering down the street and led him to the Clarks' apartment. They lived over a store, and their apartment door was right on the sidewalk.

Irma was already there when they arrived. "You are late," she called to Joe.
"The Clarks have a beautiful lawn," he replied.

The statement in parenthesis was not made available to all test subjects. Therefore, not all the test subjects shared the same background knowledge or, in Mention Theory terminology, were not aware of the antecedent use. So, Jorgensen, et al., arrive at the following: 'The results tend to support the claim that people do not perceive an implausible non-normative utterance as ironic unless it echoes some antecedent use, which is the outcome predicted by the Mention Theory of irony' (ibid. 118).

The main problem I see with Mention Theory is associated with the different use of background knowledge or antecedent use. I must agree with Clark and Gerrig whose main criticism of the Mention Theory is the following. 'A listener's understanding of an ironic utterance depends crucially on the common ground he or she believes is shared by the ironist and the audience' (ibid. 124). What Jorgensen, et al., left out in parenthesis, constituted vital background information. Without the relevant background information, an instance of irony cannot be recognized.

Willer and Groeben (1981) consider the hearer's knowledge about a speaker and with it the hearer's comparison of the speaker's utterance to her prior knowledge, i.e., background information, to fall outside the
scope of language as they do not require any signals. Nevertheless, 'Inkohärenzen, die vom Hörer aufgrund von generellem Weltwissen festgestellt werden, aber wirken unabhängig von der situativen Störung als Störfaktor für ein direkt-wörtliches Verstehen' (Willer and Groeben 1981:303), thus echoing Grice's idea of irony as a violation of some normal discourse. Any type of aberration from a purported norm can be counted as a possible signal of irony. Willer and Groeben propose a meta-level cooperation, thus expanding the Gricean concept of irony.

Da der Sprecher intendiert, daß der Hörer erkennt, daß die Aufrichtigkeitsmaxime verletzt wird, wird sie gerade durch diese Intention auf der Metaebene wieder erfüllt, der Sprecher erfüllt also durchaus das Kooperationsprinzip. Ironie ist daher Metaebenen-Kooperation (ibid. 294).

I find the idea of irony as violation to be very limiting, perhaps mainly because I object to the negative connotation of the term violation. Violation implies that something is violated, here -- the norm. Of course, there are norms, otherwise we would not have different registers available. These norms are culturally dependent. Grice's maxim of Quantity -- be brief -- e.g., would not be valid in a society that favors talk for talks sake. Norms change with new requirements and technical achievements. Grice describes an ideal conversation void of references to actual spontaneous conversation. There can in fact be no violation
of a putative Gricean norm. The notion of a stable norm is ultimately untenable.

Irony is, thus, rather a genuine indirect speech act. It cannot be expressed directly but can only be realized by means of other speech acts.

Die ironische Sprechhandlung beruht auf dem Erkennen und Wissen, daß 1. der Sprecher die Aufrichtigkeitsbedingung (Grice 1975) bezüglich der explizit ausgedrückten Illokution und/oder dem explizit geäußerten propositionalen Gehalt verletzt, 2. diese Verletzung vom Sprecher intendiert ist und 3. der Sprecher intendiert, daß der Hörer die Verletzung als intendierte erkennt (ibid. 293).

Willer and Groeben discuss the many signals of irony as Störfaktoren and classify those signals on different levels:

(a) on the basis of sound: metastasis, ellipsis, alliteration

(b) by applying morphological, syntactical criteria: word order change, word ellipsis, repetition, sentence too complex, rhyme

(c) in the area of metaphorical language: incompatibility.

Thus 'bestimmte Wörter, Laute, prosodische Besonderheiten, Intonation, bombastische Ausdrücke, gewagte Metaphern' (1980:291) constitute the linguistic signals of irony. But at the same time, irony does not necessarily have to have signals in the language per se, often a 'genügend eindeutige(r) situative(r) Kontext' (ibid.) suffices. The question now arises

(ob) vom (ironischen) Sprecher in der Tat um so mehr Ironiesignale eingesetzt werden, je geringer die situative Stützung ist; und (ob)
... vom Hörer diese Signale wirklich als Hinweise auf ironische Kooperation, d.h. eine intendierte Aufrichtigkeitsverletzung verstanden werden (ibid. 312).

Willer and Groeben have thus expanded the Gricean idea of cooperation by locating irony on a meta-level. Participants recognize irony by means of signals which fall into the linguistic as well as the extralinguistic realm, hence, Willer and Groeben can also deal with situational irony.

Also for Roy (1974 and 1978) the linguistic treatment of irony plays only a marginal role. She considers the traditional definitions of irony inadequate because 'they do not account for the data, in that they include cases of nonirony and exclude some cases of irony' (Roy 1974:171). Irony is not only expressed by opposition but also includes negation and a felicity condition. She finds irony in the word or utterance and discovers that if there is irony it can only be in the matrix clause or in both dependent and matrix together, but never just in the dependent clause. Compare,

I love people who smoke cigars on the bus.

with

I hate people who don't smoke cigars on the bus.

These sentences need the matrix to be ironic in order to be correctly interpreted. Thus the 'scope of irony (is read) over the entire clause' (1974:175).
In her dissertation (1978) Roy approaches the function of irony from the perspectives of psychology and sociology. 'In the case of irony we must have some cues that indicate to us how the speaker intends us to take what he has just said' (Roy 1978:9). Besides linguistic cues, she also recognizes paralinguistic, kinesic, social, context, and psychological cues -- extra-linguistic. 'The most familiar linguistic cues are intonational: heavy emphasis, flatness, syllable lengthening, and in at least one dialect, nasality' (ibid. 58). But at the same time she notices that the 'absence of intonational change from normal delivery ... (can) not be taken as indicative of the absence of irony' (ibid. 63).

The ironist produces (at least)\(^{23}\) two messages in the same utterance. The hearer has to notice these two possible readings and decides for herself on the basis of prior experience with the speaker, etc., which interpretation to apply. Choosing to ignore the second reading the hearer fails to notice an irony. Irony, a 'form of indirectness, ... functions ... in those contexts where direct communication is to some degree inhibited, either socially or psychologically' (ibid. 130).

Clyne (1981) also attempts a linguistic approach to irony. He discovers potential irony in the form of

\(^{23}\) We should not limit ourselves to just two possibilities.
incongruence among sociolinguistic variables in the subject area, among the interlocutors, in the distribution of roles, the type of discourse and the choice of the code of the language elements.

Certain constructions can be ironic in specific contexts. Furthermore, the transference of lexemes from one code to another constitutes a potential basis for irony. But the most obvious signals for irony are of the lexical type. He claims that particular constructions can also be used for ironic purposes.²⁴

Clyne’s basis of irony, however, is also a double-layered structure. On one layer is the actual utterance, on the other layer the irony. The victim only decodes the actual utterance, whereas the audience also notices the underlying reading -- the irony.

1.3 Conclusion

All of the different approaches to irony discussed above are united by the simple notion of duality, expressed either by opposition, tension, incompatibility, pretense, or just the plain difference between a surface and an underlying reading. Irony functions on at least two levels of discourse. These two (or more levels), even though they express conflicting and often also contradicting or

²⁴ E.g., footnotes in order to render an academic style as ironic.
paradoxical ideas, do not justify a truth-value interpretation. 'Ironie kann nie falsch oder richtig sein, wohl aber dumm, geistlos oder gemein' (Jancke 1929:17).

In order to recognize an instance of irony, a participant has to discover things that do not fit together. Hence, she needs knowledge of the context as well as of the participants. Irony qualifies the context, which 'endows the particular word or image or statement with significance' (Brooks 1971:1042). But not every irony will be successful. To be effective irony has to be registered. 'Every reader will have the greatest difficulties detecting irony that mocks his own beliefs or characteristics' (Enright 1986:51).

On the other hand, the situations allowing irony cannot be limited, but can nevertheless be acceptable by a speech community.

... we should resist the view that irony is a linguistic or stylistic category subject to rules or constraints and should rather stress its freedom from these ... The true ironist will be the man [sic] who can be ironical in ways not permitted by the rules, values and norms of his speech community' (Muecke 1972:41).

Most often, the purpose of irony has been connected with humor, but as Friedrich Schlegel so aptly states: 'Mit der Ironie ist nicht zu scherzen'.

A concise definition of irony proves to be impossible in principle. 'It is unfortunate, it is even ironical, that for so ubiquitous and multifarious and, some say, alluring a
phenomenon there should be but one word' (Enright 1986:7). Enright's complaint arises out of the problematic nature of semantic change. The term irony had at first a limited, very specialized applicability. However, with time the focus of irony changed. Once exclusively a figure in rhetoric, it has, since the Romantic era at least, also been applied to literature. And furthermore, every age prides itself on being ironic. Our whole existence is ironic, as we never have total knowledge, and we can never reason without fault. This fact can be observed even in one person's lifetime. A person amends and changes her point of view many times during her life. This same person when looking back on prior beliefs and actions incredulously notices the discrepancies and inherently with them the irony. Consequently, we inevitably remain ignorant, and such ignorance is ironical.

So, the notion of irony endures to become a stable concept, which exists and selects expression in several spheres of linguistic form:

- in the word
- in the phrase
- in the utterance
- in the discourse

and each instance has to be seen in its corresponding context.

Until now I have surveyed and discussed irony in its conventional surrounding and found that its descriptions
differ, and that real hands-on definitions are not available. We will now turn to the concept of irony in the spoken medium and examine actual uses of irony in German conversation.
CHAPTER TWO. IRONY IN SPONTANEOUS CONVERSATION

2.1 Introduction

When analyzing irony in actual spontaneous conversation, we immediately encounter several problems. As most discourse is not inherently ironic, it is necessary to search through large amounts of language data in order to find instances of irony. The vastness of these data follows from the assumption that the occurrence of irony exists in the relation of an utterance to its context. Isolated utterances are as non-ironic as they are artificial.

All utterances express overtly or covertly our presuppositions and assumptions about the world we live in.

Presuppositions, because they form much of our taken-for-granted beliefs about the structure and texture of the world, can be rather sacred, and we resent having them challenged much more than we resent a challenge to mere truth (Tyler 1978:308).

Irony does not necessarily challenge general presuppositions, but is built on the ironist's presuppositions, which she assumes everybody shares. Presuppositions are culture-bound. Our own specific culture reflects the way we are educated and brought up in the context of the family and school. Our presuppositions are often so deeply rooted that we cannot look at the world without them, and hence we superimpose this presuppositional grid on our interpretations of the world around us. We
establish groups (large or small) as a result of the solidarity which grows from the increasing number of shared presuppositions. Thus we usually expect the people around us to largely agree and share our presuppositions.

Each participant brings her own characteristic background of experiences (social, geographical, educational, etc., i.e., all the foundations of our presuppositions) into the ironic situation, and therefore we cannot expect a joint interpretation or understanding. Thus we have to resign ourselves to the idea that what is described here is in no way encapsulated, balanced or even easily and conveniently analyzable. Irony must be thought of as a variable which takes a specific form dependent upon the circumstances of its instantiation. Deceptive and disruptive by definition, irony realizes an 'opposition of appearance to reality' (Roy 1978:8). The vagueness of the definition of irony and its scattered, unpredictable occurrences make it impossible to describe irony as a bounded, clearly marked phenomenon. Nevertheless, some substance can be analyzed and identified as essentially ironic, as has been partially demonstrated by the works dealing with aspects of irony discussed in Chapter One, and as will be shown in the following discussion.
The primary data for this study are taken from spoken texts,¹ which are ordered according to differences in their content of types and instances of irony.

Text A is a highly ironic, carefully composed and rehearsed oral performance by the German comedian Otto.

Text B is a party conversation that was recorded in 1976 in West-Berlin at an engagement party. The conversation has been chosen because it provides a situation prone to irony: a circle of close friends who know about each others strengths and shortcomings, and who do not beat about the bush in conversing about them.

The conversation described here was originally taped just for enjoyment without any specific purpose other than for the future recollection of a memorable party. Although I participated, I did not take an extensive part in the conversation, and most of the participants either were not aware of the taping or forgot that it was being done. Background party noise (music, laughter, parallel conversations, etc.) makes the recording at times somewhat hard to follow.

Text C was recorded in 1987 in Houston, TX, at a 'coffee-klatsch' for German friends. Again, I was an active participant. The other participants were not aware of the taping. Also, in contrast to Text B, the participants had

¹ For complete text see Appendix.
only known each other for a few months at the time of the taping and come from different parts of Germany and Austria.

Text D is a fragment of a German radio-discussion on the subject of lowering the retirement age, that was included in a collection of colloquial German recordings, *Texte gesprochener deutscher Umgangssprache*.

Detailed analyses of the texts will bring to light a number of important questions and implications that have to be dealt with when discussing irony in spontaneous speech.

2.2 Analysis of perceived ironic exchanges in the texts

2.2.1 Text A²

**Das Wort zum Montag**

Meine Damen und Herren! Wir haben alle unsere Sorgen und Nöte und lassen uns nicht mit billigem Trost über die Last des Alltags hinwegtäuschen. Aber als ich neulich in meiner Musikbox blätterte, das stieß ich auf folgende kleine Zeile:
**Theo, wir fahr'n nach Lodz.**


² Translation in Appendix A.

Text A contains examples of irony partly achieved through the use of elevated discourse for humorous purposes.

The genre 'homily' has a distinct discourse structure, the discourse of sermons or sermonettes. It starts with a salutation, continues with a general introduction, which is then tied to a Bible verse. An exposition of the Bible verse, or at least of a part of it, follows. A repetition of the Bible verse prefaces the exposition of a probable further sense unit of the Bible verse, and so on. A short homily may end with a parable and a moral drawn from the verse, from the exposition, or from the parable.

The comedian Otto follows the general homily structure in Text A. The title \textit{Das Wort zum Montag} invokes a broadcast genre on one of the German TV-stations (ARD) on Saturday nights - \textit{Das Wort zum Sonntag} - a religious meditation of about five to ten minutes in length. A speaker generally introduces the talk with an attempt to achieve solidarity.

\(^3\) From a recording of a performance by the German comedian Otto.
between himself and his audience. Usually, the minister who conducts the homily has found a Bible verse either while thumbing through the Bible or by using the officially prescribed verse of the day. Our speaker 'flipped through his record collection' and in this way came across the verse, *Theo wir fahr'n nach Lodz*, which serves as the basis for his timely exposition.

After the reading of the verse, the speaker starts his exposition in typical fashion by examining the first word, 'Theo', while observing a number of rhetorical devices, for example, contrast of two (cf. lines 15/16) and groups of three (lines 11–13). An audience can thus easily follow the exposition.

Looking more closely at the text, we discover that the 'verse' is the title of a German Schlager (popular song) sung by Vicky Leandros. Otto mimics the homilistic technique of "extracting meaning" from internal and 'etymological' cognates. Inspecting the name 'Theo' more closely, the speaker finds it to be a part of *Theologie*, *Theodorant* (play on *Deodorant*) and, to bring it to final (and also third) absurdity *Tee oder Kaffee*. This is how Otto expands Theo's scope by assuming that *Theologie*, *Theodorant* and *Tee oder Kaffee* share the morpheme *Theo*, thus referring

---

4 Lodz, by the way, is an industrial town in Poland which is known for nothing else but pollution and squalor --not at all a place to visit.
to God. Even though new connections are discovered, the original relationship still holds.

![Diagram](image)

--- Figure 1

Throughout the speech, the speaker follows a scale of absurdity - from less to more. This scale of absurdity then can also be discovered in the exposition of *wir* from the *Vier Jahreszeiten* to *vier alle*, a double play on words. *Wir* yields *vier* which in turn yields *wir* again, this time, however, distorted. Here he uses a numeral as a pronoun on the basis of phonetic similarity.

\[
\text{WIR} \rightarrow \text{VIER} \rightarrow \text{VIER} \rightarrow \text{VIER}^5
\]

Menschen Musketiere alle

--- Figure 2

Otto then recalls a parable which functions as an 'eye-opener'. *Es fiel ihm wie Schuppen von den Augen* becomes

\[^{5}\text{Capitalization = phonetic similarity; Boldface = difference.}\]
es fiel ihm wie Schuppen aus den Haaren. Finally, the speaker concludes with a nonsensical message, mimicking perfectly the homiletic messages we often get sent our way on television.

In this little text we can observe several types of irony, that seem to be embedded in each other:

(a) the irony that appears in the selection of the homily structure for parodic purposes.

(b) the irony to be discovered in relation to the actual genre *Das Wort zum Sonntag* in juxtaposition to the putative *Das Wort zum Montag*.

(c) the use of a verse, so obviously trivial in place of a Bible verse.

(d) in the language used per se.

For the functioning of the text we assume three participants: P1 - Otto, the comedian/speaker/author, P2 - the victim/aim of the parody and P3 - the audience. P2 is here not a single person but rather an institution, namely the late night show *Das Wort zum Sonntag*. By virtue of appearing in a performance, the participant structure remains static here.

For P3 - the audience - to decode Text A, certain knowledge has to be presupposed. P3 has to be familiar with the homily structure, the actual television show, and, further, has to draw the connection to the trivial motto. We can conclude, thus, that P3 has to have some knowledge of daily cultural events in Germany.
Text A uses irony to the fullest extent. The said and the unsaid do not coincide. Accepting the said on its face-value, the hearer would appear to be very naive. In the setting of a performance by the comedian Otto, a hearer expects to hear only ironic, multi-layered messages and interprets any utterance in this context accordingly. Otto would have had to mark heavily any intended non-ironic utterances in this text, since his text is completely permeated by irony. But even if he said Spaß beiseite or uses any such 'seriousness' marker, the audience would still believe it to be a part of his routine.

The comedian composed Das Wort zum Montag in order to perform it. He knows his audience; they like his kind of humor. A figure of German popular culture, he is well known and liked. Even though he has made a few movies, his strength is performance.

The speaker signals that he intends an ironic interpretation. In Text A this is already clear by virtue of the performance status of the text. Aside from this, let us imagine for a moment that Otto's parody is broadcasted at the same time and slot as the source homily. The public (at first) will not take it for comedy. Other enterprises like this, for example, Orson Welles' 'War of the Worlds' before the Second World War, were taken seriously because of the normalcy of the context. The audience hearing Text A should become suspicious of Otto's seriousness already when the
title in announced - Das Wort zum Montag. However, because we often only hear what we want and expect to hear, some hearers might need a further signal. Thus by Aber als ich neulich in meiner Musikbox blätterte Otto's seriousness should be seriously doubted. This tells us that the setting and the time play a significant role in the decoding of instances of irony; they have to be figured in as signals.

But the speaker or ironist also enlightens the hearer as to his intentions by providing the hearer with clues. '... in order for an utterance to have meaning, it must have a meaning intention attributed to it' (Tyler 1978:385). Thus, once a hearer becomes aware of the speaker's intentions, she has the key to the purported ironic meaning. In this case, the hearer is supposed to take the performance with a grain of salt.

The irony in Text A does not only appear at the word-level and utterance-level, but has to be understood as an incongruence applying to the whole discourse. Otto gives signals at each level by juxtaposition.

2.2.2 Text B -- The Party Text

Instances of irony in Text B are of many different types. Exchange (1), for example, seems to be a prototypical example of irony.
(1) S: war ne richtige adhoc Sache irgendwie wa
M: ja spontaan nich Andrea hahaha

The irony involves the three participants: the speaker or ironist Martha, the target of the irony or victim Andrea and the audience, Stefan, Helga, Karin, and Cemal. The participants belong to a circle of good friends and know each other very well. One of Andrea's well-known and often-discussed shortcomings is her lack of flexibility to adapt to changing situations. Martha uses her knowledge of this lack of spontaneity by alluding to it and everybody present immediately understands her. The mention of Andrea and spontaan in one breath produces irony. Had Martha instead said Spontan, nich Stefan, it would not have been anything to take note of. The irony emerges from the solidarity of 'us spontaneous people over here' who understand the implications vs. the victim, inflexible Andrea. A common victim has been found, and speaker and audience experience a feeling of solidarity brought about by the irony.

---

6 The exchanges as presented in this analysis do not follow the episodic structure of the original text but are rather arranged here in sequence representing degrees of their similarity. See Appendix B for original sequencing.

7 Names have been changed.

8 Standard German -- spontan.
Now, there might be participants in the audience who do not share this knowledge about Andrea. However, Martha gives several clues so that even an outsider will be able to deduce that spontaneity is not one of Andrea's marked characteristics. The major clue is the drawn-out, lengthened pronunciation of *spontaan*, the reference to the victim by name and the giggle following the statement. Hence, a participant who does not belong to the in-group can still the irony and explain it, in this case, out of the situation. But a group member, who has additional previous knowledge about the characteristics of the victim of the irony, will recognize the irony much more readily.

Each participant in an irony then has at her disposal a certain requisite amount of knowledge about the other participants, about the situation per se, and about the broader cultural context in order to participate successfully. This knowledge has to be shared with the other participants in order for an irony to achieve its effect. *Adhoc* triggers *spontaan*. The knowledge of the semantic relationship between *adhoc* and *spontaan* is, of course, already present prior to the situation. Nevertheless, *adhoc* is the primary stimulus, and the irony of *spontaan* is its response.

Furthermore, the decoding of this instance of irony is based on both the cultural background as well as the age of
the participants. In current Western culture, we think it very important to be spontaneous in decision-making at the workplace as well as in our social encounters. Thus members of a group who do not have this ability often experience ridicule, as shown in exchange (1). Irony communicates an attitude, forcing a second or third or fourth, etc., reading onto an utterance by means of specific signals.

Martha gives us a number of linguistic and extralinguistic clues to effect an ironic (further) reading, thus influencing the content interpretation:

1. lengthening of the vowel in spontan
2. exaggerated intonation in the tag question
3. the reference to the victim Andrea (you agree, don't you!?)
4. her burst into laughter
5. her allusion to the audience's prior experience with Andrea
6. juxtaposition of Andrea with spontaan

Martha changed the expression spontan by lengthening the already long vowel /a/. Because an expression can never be seen in isolation from the situation, this lengthening effects the irony content and triggers an ironic interpretation. Thus the juxtapositions exemplified in Figure 3 are at the basis of the irony.

---

9 Here a group of Germans in their early twenties.
Instances of irony do not survive retelling very well. Irony exists only in the context of its occurrence. If one audience-member wants to relate exchange (1) to a person not familiar with the participants involved, she would have to explain the whole context, in other words, recreate it: Andrea's proneness to inflexibility, the roles of Andrea, Martha, and the audience in this particular example and in general. There would appear a large number of phrases like 

```
und dann hat sie ... gesagt, und er sagte dann ... und dann sagte sie ... und dann haben sie alle furchtbar gelacht
```

ending with a disgruntled du hättest halt dabei sein müssen. But being able to listen to the whole tape or to view this situation on a video, an audience member unfamiliar with the situation could get a better idea of the going-ons because she has already witnessed one instance of Andrea's inflexibility, namely the exchange of (2a) and (2b), see below. Hence, the more specific information available to a potential audience member, the better the understanding of an instance of irony.
As mentioned above, exchange (1) plays on previous knowledge as well as on immediate situational experience. Its 'precursors' are

(2a)
S: ja anstossen könnt wa och noch ma
A: am liebsten mit anderen Gläsern wa Stefan

(2b)
S: war des deins?
    keine ansteckenden Krankheiten
gloob ick jedenfalls
(subject is generally changed but Andrea keeps throughout on the subject of the wrongfully used glass)
...
A: die andren
die ... sind doch och noch bald leer
...
A: ne det is meins jewesen
det hat Stefan jehabt
    und jetzt nimmst du det och noch, wa

In this episode (2a, 2b), two participants are actively involved. It starts with an instance of irony produced by the participant Andrea. She shows Stefan's mistake by alluding to it indirectly. She could have chosen to say: Du hast mein Glas genommen. But instead she opts to finish his sentence ironically -- isn't it nicer to toast with other people's glasses than keeping track of one's own -- thus implying that Stefan cannot get enough.

The irony of episode (2a) mocks the immediate action within the situation instead of drawing on an acquaintance with the person Stefan's general characteristics. Stefan does not habitually drink from other people's glasses, rather he has obviously taken Andrea's glass by mistake.
The intention of the irony is not an 'us against you' but rather pointing to a 'you went wrong in this situation, but it doesn't really matter that much.' What constitutes the set of clues for the irony here?

1. Andrea's statement which is contrary to expectations, because of her stating something she surely cannot mean. It is incongruent

2. the tag-question, wa Stefan and with it the exaggerated intonation

3. her allusion to Stefan's using other glasses in order to get a better share of the available champagne

Am liebsten mit anderen Gläsern invokes a further reading. Andrea juxtaposes this statement to the other participants' expectations in the situation. Both possible readings subsist simultaneously.

\[
\text{Du hast mein Glas : Du kannst nicht genug genommen kriegen} \\
\text{'}Am liebsten mit anderen Gläsern'}
\]

Figure 4

Stefan does not wait long to repartee. His first reaction is a surprised and innocent question. However, he then attacks Andrea very subtly. It is known to him and other members of the group that Andrea has a tendency to be a hypochondriac. He therefore assures her that he is quite
sure that he does not have any communicable diseases in an attempt to 'calm her'. His response has an ironic intent, because

1. talking about diseases, especially communicable ones is not always considered appropriate or proper

2. Stefan's attempt to calm Andrea is insincere as he knows about her fear of diseases

3. with the disclaimer 'gloob ick jedenfalls', he puts his previous statement in jeopardy, while simultaneously appearing innocent and honestly concerned.

The expression *keine ansteckenden Krankheiten, gloob ick jedenfalls* as such does not contain the irony. The irony applies to its content 'fear of disease'. The truth value of Stefan's statement does not change but becomes questionable. Not knowing where one stands in relation to a possible disease is often considered more agony than being sure.

```
+ keine ansteckenden Krankheiten
irony --->
? keine ansteckenden Krankheiten
```

**Figure 5**

The repartee irony of occurrence (2b) presupposes some knowledge of the victim's personality, at least knowledge of her anxious feelings about diseases. Stefan wholeheartedly intended the irony. These situations of intended ironies
have to be differentiated from the traditionally so-called situational irony in which the irony found in the juxtaposition of the situation and the conversation or action of the participants is not intended by the participants.

An unintentional irony is a kind of unplanned irony, characterized by a speaker's statement or action which, when compared to the situation can be taken ironically. The prototypical example of unintended irony is the tragic irony of Oedipus, which Oedipus does not intend but only discovers too late. Thus when the speaker himself does not notice the irony of his remark or action, but the victim and/or the audience, on the other hand, do so, we have an instance of unintended irony.

Intentional and unintentional irony differ by speaker intent only. A speaker can always feign knowledge of irony and might want to have an actually intentional irony understood as unintentional for certain purposes (e.g., humor). The reverse of this scenario can also be imagined, namely, that a speaker is taking credit for an actually unintended irony.

With the exception of (3), the speakers intended the instances of irony discussed in Text B, mostly for the

---

10 Cf. 1.2.4
purpose of appearing humorous and witty for the benefit of
the audience.

(3)
C: Auf Klo hinstelln, ha
das muß sich automatisch einschalten Mensch
die Leute dürfen das ..
natürlich nichts davon wissen ja
oh da komm Sachen raus

The ambiguity of oh da komm Sachen raus eluded Cemal.
The juxtaposing of this statement with the situation
provides the irony, as recognized by Martha who points to
it.11 Cemal's unawareness becomes evident in his reaction to
Martha's following irony. Cemal expects to get revealing
monologues by secretly taping the goings-on in the
bathroom.

But what makes us recognize a statement as ironic?
Among other factors, the participant's reaction must be part
of it, previously shared or general knowledge another part.
Instances of irony are not necessarily marked by specific
phonetic, morphological, or syntactic devices, even though
such devices are most often used to indicate an occurrence
of irony, i.e., they provide the clue needed in some cases
to recognize an irony.

Ideally, an ironically signalled utterance should make
the hearer stop and reconsider. This reconsideration usually
happens fast and goes by unnoticed. However, at times the
significance of the just heard is realized not immediately

11 Cf. item (13) below.
but after a delay. Television sitcoms, for example, play with the victim's slow recognition of the meaning of the utterance. We often see the victim leaving the room after a speaker's statement only to return in disbelief, i.e., putting time and space between the utterance and his reaction, and concomittantly, between himself and the speaker. This 'after-effect' can be observed in the delayed reaction of the participants to the following:

(4)
S: Fäkalästhetiker
  wo is der Wodka?

The speaker juxtaposes Fäkalästhetiker, a nonce-form to a seemingly unimportant question, a request for a drink. Stefan understates the outrageousness of the nonce-form by a particular use of intonation. The effect is like that described above. Only some time later does one participant in the group catch on to the outrageousness of the utterance and then attempts to 'publicize' it. Even though the trigger for Stefan's statment can be found in the discourse, the irony cannot be predicted, i.e., nothing insures us that Stefan will take the bait and come up with an ironic utterance. Well, here he took the bait and comments ironically on the preceding conversation:

1. juxtaposing two sentences that are not related to each other

2. his intonation, which is unexpressive
3. his partaking in two conversations
   (Fäkalästhetiker towards the previous irony,
    wo is der Wodka towards the hostess)

4. the invention of a new term

5. the absurdity of the term itself

So, in essence Stefan proposes a new form combined of

two already known parts:

```
  excrement   appreciation (of beauty)
  ↑          ↑
Fäkal    Ästhetiker
```

'Fäkalästhetiker'

Figure 6

Neither episode (1) nor (2a) or (2b) provides any new
salient information. They are important mainly for the
maintenance of the 'party-mode'. Also the intonation does
not always mark an irony as salient. What is called dry wit
often plays with the intonation, i.e., the suppression of
expressive intonation. As seen in instance (4), an
outrageous remark pronounced with unexpressive intonation
understates its purported impact.

It is possible to understand irony as constituting a
disturbance. It not only interrupts the flow of
conversation, but it also interrupts the flow of
information. But information-exchange or information-
gathering is only one part of a conversation. We often talk for the pure pleasure of talking without the need to convey anything informative. This is, e.g., clearly the case in Text B.

The seeming purposelessness of the conversation being treated here makes it hard to find a mainline of development, a red thread. The discourse provides a good example of talk without a specific purpose, as a whole with no other point than entertainment, but interspersed with numerous episodes that might prove informative to certain of the participants.\textsuperscript{12} The conversation in (5) below exemplifies a more successful exchange of information. It is, however, in violation of the party-mode, and thus ultimately gets valued negatively. Helga offers Martha the benefit of her experience with an apartment agency and proposes a number of ways to deal with the problem.

(5)
M: ihr habt wenichstens schon-ne schöne Wohnung und allet so
H: versuch doch ooch übern Erbbauverein
M: die Wohnung und allet
S: Wohnung kriegste doch immer
H: mach doch ooch über sone Genossenschaft des is eacht am jünstichst'n
M: wie kommt man denn da rein oder hin oder wat?
H: kaufsten Anteil \textsuperscript{13}
S: Geschäftsanteil koofen ]
H: so ...sone Art Aktie

\textsuperscript{12} Cf. also Halliday 1985, who differentiates between interpersonal purpose -- here the pure "pleasure-talk" -- and ideational purpose -- in the conversation of Text B, no specific ideational purpose can be found.

\textsuperscript{13} ] = simultaneously spoken.
für hundert Mark oder so
alle Jahre
kriegste sogarn paar Mark Dividende
kann dir ja ma die Adresse vom Erbbauverein jebn
kannste mal hinjehn
S: *ach Alte*
mach doch nich son Uffstand
H: na is doch waah
du kannst dich mal erkundigen
wenn die viel Wohnungen freihaben

Helga is very serious throughout this exchange, Martha, however, has not really made up her mind to acknowledge her seriousness when she says *Wie kommt man denn da rein oder hin oder wat?* somehow ridiculing Helga's genuine concern, but simultaneously prompting Helga for more information. Stefan's reaction shows that in the situation of a party this type of serious talk is out of place. At first he goes along, even providing a little additional information; but then he chides his girlfriend Helga with

(6)
*S: ach Alte, mach doch nich son Uffstand*

playing the role of a long-suffering husband with a wife who always shoots off at the mouth and constantly has to be stopped from doing so. Comparing Helga's speech to an uprising (*Uffstand*), Stefan uses a hyperbole as a means to be ironic.
Irony fits the sense used here and provides a rubric for many types of figurative expression. Figures of speech often show the possibility of an ironic reading. A good example for this can be seen in instance (4). This nonce-form (Fäkalästhetiker) has all the signals of a metaphor, especially as a way of naming new things.

The instances of irony found in Text B are produced among other purposes (e.g., embarrassment), for the enjoyment of the group (audience). Many instances of irony can be laughed about analogous to jokes. Others, however, appear in situations where humor is not an issue, e.g., irony as control or as a means of voicing dissent\(^\text{14}\). In general, irony plays with language, as exemplified by utterance (4) where a sudden juxtaposition of incompatible terms shows us the dry wit of the speaker. In (7), also involving Stefan, two different styles 'clash'.

\[(7)\]
S: wollta richtig verlobt sein
ich hoffe
ihr wißt den Ernst der Lage zu ... zu schätzen

\(^{14}\) Cf. 5.2.5
Stefan juxtaposes a clearly colloquial way of talking with a Berlin flavor (fast, drawn together), to a very formal way of speaking (slow, standard, with long pauses) as if mimicking a minister or Justice of the Peace. In reaction to his utterance, Martha proposes that he should become a Justice of the Peace. Of course, we have here discovered another example of irony. The signals are:

1. intonation contour (more monotonous, mimicking formal intonation patterns)

2. the switch from colloquial to formal also coinciding with faster to slower delivery

3. the hesitation, mimicking perfectly the stilted speech of a civil servant

4. the 'violation' of the 'party', as he is seemingly serious

```
normal guy -------> justice of peace
             versus
dialectal -------> formal
colloquial
```

Figure 8

The stimulus for occurrence (7) comes out of the situation per se, the talk about the engagement, and the congratulatory remarks right beforehand. The irony lies mainly in the clash of the two rhetorical styles; Stefan
wants to communicate his ambiguous feelings about the whole engagement and simultaneously attack Martha's vulnerability.

Stefan produces a similar type of irony in

(8)
S: machen wa allet janz förmlich hier

The expression *förmlich* is characteristic of a different style of language, which at this point he does not develop. He actually does not want to be formal at all, he just teases Martha and her request for formality in this informal situation. The irony is produced by a combination of 1) an assumed clash of styles and 2) a juxtaposition of incongruent words or phrases.

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{dialectal} & & \text{formal} \\
\text{colloquial} & & \\
\text{'}machen wa allet janz /förmlich/ hier' & & \\
\end{array}
\]

Figure 9

Just as a contrast of styles can be understood as a signal of irony, the juxtaposition of words or phrases which seemingly do not belong together or of catchwords in the context of colloquial speech can be understood as a sign of irony as well. Sentence (9) provides an example of the effect of this juxtaposition.
(9) 
H: wo ick so jeizich bin
da mach-ick Konsumverzicht

The use of the term Konsumverzicht suggests the moralistic boycotting of the existing consumer system by refusing to make purchases. The idea of Konsumverzicht is connected with a particular political consciousness. Helga, however, bases her use of Konsumverzicht on her stinginess and on only one specific situation, i.e., her decision not to buy tickets to go and see a rock-group as they are too expensive. She expresses the irony by:

1. the use of a word with a connotation conflicting with the context, hence in disregard of its connotations
2. juxtapositioning of Konsumverzicht with a very colloquial style
3. unemphatic intonation, no special stress on Konsumverzicht

\[ \text{political consciousness} \quad \ast \quad \text{stinginess} \]
\[ \text{Konsumverzicht} \]

Figure 10

Another related example is Martha's comment about Norbert, the involuntary telephone-partner.

(10) 
M: der hat so gestern is-er da
hat-er da so mit so dussligen Fremdwörtern argumentiert
ja nich ... ja nich jesche ... jescheckt
Complaining about Norbert's use of *Fremdwörter*, Martha uses them herself, namely, *argumentiert* and *jescheckt*, embedded in a very colloquial, dialectally flavored style. While *argumentiert* has perhaps already become such an integral part of the German language that it can hardly be called a *Fremdwort* any longer, *jescheckt* has only relatively recently come into German. With the influence of American English, it became a *Fremdwort*, whereas *argumentiert* finds a wider application. Accordingly a number of triggers for irony can be found also in this example:

1. juxtaposition of
düsslige *Fremdwörter* with *argumentiert*
colloquial versus formal
*jescheckt* versus *argumentiert*

2. discrepancy between the content of the message and its actual words, i.e., Martha complains about the use of *Fremdwörter* but uses them herself

3. stimulus from the ongoing telephone conversation with Norbert

4. Norbert as the victim is not an active participant, he is an 'easy' target

negative : *Fremdwort* *Fremdwort*

' düssligen Fremdwörtern argumentiert ... jescheckt'

Figure 11

The word *jescheckt* underwent a semantic change, at the time it was borrowed into German. German *das habe ich nicht gescheckt* in this context can be glossed as English 'I
didn't get it'. It is in among younger German speakers to use Americanisms like cool /kʌl/, abgiefckt /əbɡəfakt/, die Scene /ˈsɪːn/, etc. In the Party Text we also find, for example,

(11)
S: jetzt seit-er engaged
M: jetzt sind-wer engaged

Engaged is not as widely used as cool or schecken. Its scope is narrower than the German verlobt. Stefan knows, however, that all of the participants have some knowledge of English.

The use of an Americanism shows the very colloquial nature of (11) and also its lack of serious intent. Even though the participants adhere to the 'traditional' and 'official' way of celebrating the actual engagement announcement they constantly disturb it by handling it very flippantly. Neither bride nor groom have serious intentions, and the engagement seems to be just another good excuse for a party.

All of the participants share the general knowledge about formal behavior at social occasions, among others, of course, engagement ceremonies. Notwithstanding, the participants have chosen not to behave formally, as is
evident especially from their language and their frequent use of ironical remarks.

The exchange in (11) exemplifies the deviations from a more traditional engagement ceremony as does (12). The irony is signalled in the discrepancy between the traditional decorum and the behavior shown here. Rejecting the traditional way, the participants consider a marriage or an engagement to be examples of meaningless and unnecessary bourgeois customs. Martha, aware of the other participants' ambivalent sentiments, can still not hide all her embarrassment about her decision to celebrate the engagement despite such reservations and thus she becomes very vulnerable. To overcome this shared embarrassment the participants constantly question the validity of the institution through frequent joking and the use of irony. Martha is the most frequent 'attacker' and only twice the victim.

(12)
M: Also im Namen unserer neugegründeten Fanfamilie bedanken-wer ha-ha uns bei allen.

Martha's assumption that her engagement will make each participant a fan of the couple has no basis in reality. However, Martha uses Fanfamilie in order to direct a slight embarrassment away from her. But when the other participants do not react with the prescribed traditional behavior, which would include congratulations after the engagement, etc., surprisingly, she reacts as if she were hurt.
She has no German equivalent term for Fan at her disposal, except perhaps Idol. With the borrowing of American and English pop-culture many new terms have come into German, among others Fan /fæn/ and Groupie /ɡruːpiː/. 

Martha and Çemal participants

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{idol} & \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{group} \\
\text{worship} & \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{'Fanfamilie'}
\end{align*} \]

Figure 12

Martha's use of irony in exchange (12) induces the other participants to take the occasion even less seriously. Instance (12) misleads the participants as to Martha's intentions. An ironic interchange, therefore, can also make us aware of power structures at play among the participants. This leads us to

\[(13)\]

M: Natürlich sonst würdense ja nich uffs Klo jehn

Çemal proposed in exchange (3) which preceded (13), that they put a tape-recorder in the bathroom to see what people might say or do when they are in the john. This proposal produces the unintended irony oh, da komm Sachen

\[ ^{16} \text{Fan actually appeared as early as 1945 in German (with the American occupational forces).} \]
raus. Cemal does not notice at that time the possibility of several interpretations. The statement can either be taken as he intends, namely, that people will talk to themselves and reveal secrets or that literally other things will come out in the situation. To Cemal's annoyance, Martha only picks up on the reading not intended by him. Why is (13) ironic?

1. Martha disregards Cemal's obvious intentions and only picks up on the second reading

2. she takes his statement at face value (Sachen rauskommen = scheissen)

3. her voice gets a little shrill at the end, shortly before she starts laughing

4. her laughter

excrements revealing stuff

'oh da komm Sachen raus'

'natürlich, sonst würdense ja nich uffs Klo jehn'

Figure 13

The intentional disregard of Cemal's presuppositions seems to be where the main focus of the irony lies. Both participants use colloquial speech. Interesting in this particular example is not only the irony per se, but also Cemal's reaction to it. At first he does not understand the implications. He still sees only one reading and defends and
justifies himself: *Ja, ich meine Gespräche nich.* Utterance (4) constitutes the end and climax of this exchange.

The role of the victim in utterance (13) has to be described more fully. The participants laugh about Cemal. He chooses not to laugh but to defend and explain his utterance rather seriously. With this action he fails to succeed in rebutting Martha's statement and, thus, to turn the situation around. Martha still exerts control. It has become apparent in the conversation that some of the participants are more prone to produce irony, whereas others are more victim-prone. Consequently, the appearance of irony indicates an implicit power structure. In occurrence (13) the power-relation remains static, Cemal cannot change his status. Instance (1) exemplifies static power structure: Andrea does not repartee at all.

The use of irony and the establishment and maintenance of power are interrelated. Power is a relational or interactional concept, an asymmetry involving at least two participants -- one having more control and the other having less. One participant possesses a status which the second participant lacks, but acknowledges or accepts in a specific cultural context. The power relation, especially if not built on culturally-induced power, i.e., status, money, education, is situation-bound and subject to constant variation.
The telephone conversation\textsuperscript{17} represents another instance of an interplay of irony and power. Martha violates a basic rule in her telephone conversations with Norbert by not introducing herself but immediately proceeding to ask a number of quite personal questions which Norbert at first only reluctantly answers. At this time she has an advantage over him. She knows her interlocutor but he does not know her. He is cooperative at first, but he gets more and more annoyed. Line 40 shows Martha quoting Norbert's reply, indicating to the audience that she considers him to be very uncooperative. Also with this action, she tries to strengthen her solidarity ties with the audience.\textsuperscript{18}

Why is this telephone conversation ironic?

1. Martha knows who she is talking to, Norbert does not. This gives Martha a definite advantage, as the audience is also on her side

2. the questions she asks are insignificant for Norbert, he is left in the dark about her motives and he is not about to commit himself to a stranger

3. his disregard of Spandau (line 40 - her quote) builds the solidarity with the audience

4. To further strengthen her position, Martha tells a story about Norbert, namely, instance (12)

In (14) we see the same subject "telephone conversation" applied to members of the audience:

\textsuperscript{17} See Appendix B, line 44 ff.

\textsuperscript{18} This is easy to do as most of them have grown up in Spandau and are very sensitive to criticism about their home district.
(14)  
M: ej, wir könn ja mal bei Helga und Stefan anrufen nachher  
H: ma sehn, wer da ranjeht, wa?  
M: vielleicht die aus Westdeutschland  
die ha bei ha euch ha wohnnt jetzt  
H: ach die ihr einjeladen habt

Helga repartees successfully both times. Martha's suggestion (line 53) cannot be taken seriously, since Helga and Stefan are in the audience. Martha gets into the conversation with a very common opener ej. The factual background can only be understood by knowing about Helga and Stefan's relationship and its associated problems. One of those problems involved a guy from Westdeutschland. What signals the irony in this exchange?

1. Martha's (line 55/56) allusion to previous incidences

2. her plan to call at all

3. Martha's teasing

4. the doubletalk

(14) shows yet another problem encountered when analyzing irony. It deals with the knowledge of personal background that is needed for an audience member in order to understand the implications.

In the following example (15), Stefan's statement is ironic, Martha's is not. Stefan directs his statement towards Karin, alluding to Karin's always late or no-show boyfriend. Stefan knows very well who rang the bell.
(15a)  
\begin{array}{ccc}
2 & 3 & 1 \\
S: \text{wer kommen jetzt}
\end{array}

(15b)  
\begin{array}{ccc}
2 & 3 & 1 \\
M: \text{wer kommen jetzt}
\end{array}

Utterance (15a) is an example of an irony expressed purely by gestures and movements. By contrast to (15b) which has the same intonation (2 3 1), and was spoken simultaneously, (15a) further shows that signals of irony are not necessarily linguistic. Martha's statement provides something like a 'control-group' in this case. She uses the very same intonation, but we hear genuine surprise in her words, as she did not expect anybody else.

How can we assume that (15a) is ironic, whereas (15b), spoken with the same intonation by Martha just indicates surprise? Obviously a statement like 'well, he sounds like this, and she sounds like that' will not make everybody happy because the 'sounds like' is too vague. We have to take other means into account. Stefan not only 'sounds like' but also 'looks as if...' The same seems to be the case for Martha. We notice at this point, that gestures, looks, any type of movement play an important and integral part.

An ironic utterance implies the context of underlying beliefs and presuppositions, prejudices, etc., in all cases. In order for an irony to be successful 'we must have some cues that indicate to us how the speaker intends us to take
what he has just said' (Roy 1978:58). In example (15a) the
cues are the sequence of pitch-levels and both the gestures
and facial movements. In utterance (16) we understand that
the last thing Martha wants is for Cemal to leave the house
without the engagement ring that associates him with her.

(16)
M: nur wenn man alleine ausjeht
der soll man-en abmachen
wollteste doch sagn

The signals of irony here include:

1. Martha's interpretation of Cemal's statements (lines
   182/183)

2. implications of Cemal's possible dishonesty

3. putting words in Cemal's mouth

4. change in intonation (line 184) pitch and stress are
   intensified (higher and louder respectively)

Instance (16) consists basically of one statement. In
exchange (17), on the other hand, a number of ironic
utterances are present. Exchange (17) has an abstract
victim, namely, institutionalized love.

(17)
1- H: jetzt dürfen ja
2- M: naja halb erst halb erst
3- C: halb
4- A: also laßt euch det vor -
5- bis zur Hochzeit dürfen nur halb
6- M: und ab der Hochzeit?
7- A: dürfen dreihundertprozentig ]
8- C: oder überhaupt nich mehr ]

This rather long exchange provides a number of ironies.
This exchange involves double-talk. Never once do the
participants overtly express what Martha and Cemal are now
officially allowed to do; nevertheless, everybody knows. The first dürfen refers actually only refers to hugs and kisses, but throughout the exchange the reference obliquely changes to having sex. Nur halb dürfen is an expression hard to explain. By replacing halb with etwas, the speaker would have been more literal and precise. What is half a kiss anyway? Obviously the metaphorical expression here signifies the stages leading from bachelorhood to engagement to marriage. Engagement is not the whole thing, but only half of the matter. Hence the verdict that Martha and Cemal are allowed only half until the wedding. After the wedding on the other hand 300 % becomes permissible. In line (17-1), Cemal refers to an accepted presupposition, sanctioned by society, sex looses a lot of fun. In line (17-6) Martha feigns astonishment expressed through her exaggerated intonation and lengthening of the utterance.

The situations presented here in Text B are the most fruitful for the production of irony. Roy (1978), for example, discovered that situations, even if artificially created, where in-group solidarity is paired with out-group hostility can bring about ironic utterances. We have found this scenario in Text B.

2.2.3 Text C

Text C constitutes part of a longer conversation among four German students living in Houston, who are not as
familiar with each other as the participants in Text B. At first, the four participants conduct the discussion on the topic Kaffee quite seriously including a minor difference of opinions concerning the strength of American coffee.

We can observe a build-up toward the actual introduction of irony. More and more the topic 'coffee' is talked about in terms of specific cultural items, German and Austrian, and exemplified by the numerous types of coffee available in a Vienna Kaffeehaus, like Schwarz, Melange, etc. The discussion culminates in Ruth's remark:

(18)
n' Schwarzen
is wie gehst in ein Restaurant
und sagst du möchtest was zu essen

This remark is witty but not necessarily ironic. But Ruth pursues it further and actually has a victim in mind as evidenced by her next remark:

(19)
wenn die Deutschen dann sagen
ich hätt gern 'nen [kafə]

[kafə] seems to her the epitomy of bad taste. Ruth, an Austrian, surrounded by Germans, does not aim her criticism at the other participants but rather at a certain type of German tourists visiting Vienna.

In the following, we will examine this example as to its irony content, as it seems to be situated at the periphery of irony. Three participants are involved here:
P1 - the ironist, Ruth
P2 - the victim, the German tourist
P3 - the audience, Peter, David, Karin

Ruth sets up solidarity-bonds with her audience against P2, as evidenced by the further conversation, in which her audience agrees with her. Peter, for example, remarks

(20)
das find ich so ätzend
das klingt so furchtbar

Hence, two conditions of irony are fulfilled. We do not find a multi- or double-layeredness here. Ruth is quite straightforward with her criticism. However, in (19) her criticism is only indirectly expressed by using *wenn-dann* to imply *ich kann es nicht leiden* ('I can't stand it'). *Wenn-dann* can imply an irrealis condition as well as the repeated occurrence of a dreaded event. Furthermore, it has a negative undertone.

---

Figure 14

---

19 *Wenn-dann* is a very interesting combination and should be looked at more fully. All of its interpretations have an element of irrealis but some are rather temporal, while others express cause-effect relationships, etc.
Nevertheless, Ruth's remark can be interpreted to be ironic in the context of its utterance, particularly, if we examine what it describes apart from the conversational context. Entering a Kaffeehaus in Vienna and ordering, an Austrian will have to specify what type of coffee she wants to have served. If she fails to do so, the situation cannot be interpreted but as ironic. Based on the knowledge shared between the waiter and his Austrian customer, the waiter will think that the customer is pulling his leg and expect a second message. But an uninformed foreigner, who orders an unspecified coffee in a Vienna Kaffeehaus will perhaps be considered ignorant but will also be forgiven for it (if from a sympathetic and popularly accepted country).

Clyne (1987) describes a person who grew up on the island of Aruba speaking flawless English and Dutch, who noted the following upon his first visit to Holland: He asked a passer-by in his flawless Dutch to be so kind as to show him what mail-boxes might look like. With good reason, the passerby felt offended and thought himself to be the object of a joke. The speaker then decided to put a little foreign accent into his Dutch in order to avoid further similar embarrassing moments. These incidents show that our ideolect is our 'shop-sign' through which we are judged by our fellow men.

Text C shows less instances of irony than the two preceding texts. The following text, D, is situated in a
very formal surrounding, in contrast to the other three texts.

2.2.4 Text D

Due to the nature of its subject as well as the official setting, ironic remarks are rare in this text. Actually, I have found only one potentially ironic utterance. The discussants keep their cool and try to voice their opinions in as direct a way as possible. The effect of irony in this and comparable settings cannot be predicted and might prove potentially harmful. The backgrounds of the audience are varied and are thus hard to judge for the discussants. Consequently, the audience has a very low irony expectancy.

This does not imply that the politicians are always straightforward. A number of metaphors and colloquialisms occur in the text:

(21) ich will es nur im Raum stehen lassen
(22) weil die Zeit uns ja schließlich sonst davonläuft
(23) wir haben den ganzen Salat
(24) der Spuk mit einer möglichen Kapitaldeckung

---

20 See Appendix D.
We notice that nonce-forms are marked as such and explained, for example

(25)  
Pensionierungsaaktionen  
wenn ich das so sagen darf

With the remark *wenn ich das so sagen darf*, the speaker marks *Pensionierungsaaktionen* as nonce and gives everybody in the audience a chance to understand the remark as novel but understandable. Another instance of this can be found a little further down:

(26)  
der *sogenannte* Rentenberg  
d.h. also das ungünstige Verhältnis von aktiver versicherter Bevölkerung und Rentnern

The speaker here marks the nonce-form *Rentenberg* twice, once by *sogenannte* and then by a precise explanation of what he exactly means by it. Actually, the other interlocutors also employ the term.

We will see, however, that even in a serious discussion like this we can find an instance of irony, for example,

(27)  
ich kann mir ungefähr denken, was Sie noch sagen wollen

The speaker directs this ironic remark to one of the discussants with the aim to shut him up. It implies a certain predictability. And who wants to be predictable? Thus even though the surface reading can easily be interpreted as being accommodating, the second reading is clearly accessible as a possibility.
Moderators have certain means at their disposal in order to successfully silence discussants without seeming rude or offensive. Here the moderator's remarks can be taken two ways. And while the discussant is thinking about the implications of the utterance, the moderator can get on with the program.

In general, however, instances of irony are rare in these types of conversation. We will see evidence from a recent speech to the German Bundestag, what an alleged use of irony in an inappropriate context can do for a politician's career.\[21\]

2.3 Discussion
2.3.1 Types of irony as determined by the context

Up to this point I have allowed the data to guide me through the explanation of instances of irony. In order to explain the instances of irony identified, I have inevitably had to elaborate the context, which includes the cultural setting, the situation, the participants, and their backgrounds. The context thus plays an important role in the discovery of an irony. Without knowledge of the context, the understanding of an irony is not possible.

\[21\] Jenninger's speech to the German Bundestag, commemorating the 50th anniversary of Kristallnacht -- this text is discussed in Chapter Three.
The importance of context-familiarity is evidenced by the often futile attempt of a participant to paraphrase an experienced irony. This is like trying to retell a joke. But jokes\textsuperscript{22} constitute miniature separate entities and are intended to 'speak for themselves'. Most ironies can only be explained, but the explanation inevitably weakens the effect. In order to fully understand and appreciate an ironic moment, 'you simply had to be there'. Likewise, a joke explained at length is often no longer funny either.

The analysis of the data has so far opened the way to a discussion of the problems involved in an exhaustive definition of irony. But it has also been indicated that irony cannot be characterized in a succinct definition. A lot of the literature tries to define irony in a limited and limiting way. Ultimately, such attempts have turned out to be unsuccessful. What is more interesting and rewarding is the treatment of irony outside the realm of necessary and sufficient conditions, i.e., to talk about irony in terms of what it does, what its effects are, and how it is used and recognized.

We do not expect to find agreement among all speakers of a language concerning the incidence as well as the interpretation of instances of irony. Different participant backgrounds determine the way irony is understood. Knowledge

\textsuperscript{22} Cf. 5.2.5
is a primary factor. Each participant in an irony has at her disposal the requisite knowledge about the other participants, about the situation per se, and about the cultural context for interpreting the irony. In a successful irony this knowledge has to be shared by the other participants. In order to examine the nature of the knowledge required, we need to take another look at some of the examples (discussed previously):

Episode (2b) presupposes the audience's personal knowledge about (at least one of) the participants actively involved. Here an audience member has to know about Andrea's (the victim's) feelings about diseases.

In episodes (2a) and (4), the presupposed prior knowledge is predominantly situation-bound. By that I mean that the stimulus for the irony in both cases lies in the shared previous situation.

Finally, items (7) and (9) presuppose a more general knowledge. In item (7), the audience members have to be able to recognize differences of style, i.e., a colloquial versus a formal style. In item (9), the term Konsumverzicht (together with all its usual and unusual connotations) has to be known.

These three types of presupposed knowledge then provide a convenient classification of types of irony based on the background knowledge needed for recognition of an irony. The irony based on such individual knowledge as the audience's
(and the victim's) knowledge about the ironist's background, i.e., particular personal knowledge, can be called **Personal Irony**. A given participant (victim or audience) checks her prior knowledge about the ironist's person against the potentially ironic statement to determine the intentions of the ironist.

The participants' knowledge about a particular situation, especially the immediate discourse situation, is required in what we can now term **Situational Irony**. The audience, in addition to the speaker and the victim, all have to be present in the discourse situation per se.

Finally, shared general knowledge, in-group as well as societal or cultural knowledge, is presupposed in the third type of irony, which I call **General Irony**. The instances of irony we encounter often display a combination of the properties of these three types. But an irony will typically belong more to one type than to another.

Thus we focus on irony here from the perspective of participant knowledge, i.e., what is needed by the participants to identify and understand an ironic expression. So far I have assumed three participants in any ironic exchange. In item (2a), for example, there is first the speaker or ironist Andrea; second the hearer and victim
Stefan; and finally, the audience, i.e., all the other participants in the conversation.²³

The three participants exhibit different degrees of familiarity with each other. The following scenarios for combination of situations and degree of familiarity are possible:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>speaker/ironist</th>
<th>victim</th>
<th>audience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*VI.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 15

Except for II. and VI., each possible scenario of Figure 15 consists of at least two participants who know each other well. A situation like VI. is not feasible as it would be anomalous. We would need somebody who is 'an acquaintance of...'. Item (1), above, falls under category I. where all participants share overlapping knowledge about each other.²⁴ Degrees of familiarity have to be considered, too. Some participants are closer to each other than others and

---

²³ This three-part division is in general agreement with Freud's (1940) discussion of the participants in comic and in jokes.

²⁴ I am using 'familiar' in lieu of a potentially better term. I want to indicate shared in-group and cultural knowledge.
consequently share more knowledge about each other. This is especially true if they are also friends.\textsuperscript{25}

The roles of participants in spontaneous discourse are not necessarily static. In item (2b) of Text B, the participant roles have reversed, compared with those in (2a). Stefan appears now as the ironist and Andrea as his victim. The audience functions in both episodes as a participant observer and also checks and determines the validity of an irony. Furthermore, the three-participant-division is not discrete. For example, the role of hearer and audience can be performed by one and the same person.

In Text B, the participant roles are also variable. The roles of P1, P2, and P3 change with each instance of irony. The same can be expected for Texts C and D. These are also spontaneously performed texts, in which the ironist is not necessarily one and the same person throughout. But in Text A, P1 never gives up his role. The text is a monologue. Audience involvement is planned. In situations like Otto's comedy performance, P2 and P3 can conflate, especially, if P1 chooses to attack his audience (P3).

The background of the participants and the nature of the setting in Texts C and D also needs to be examined. The participants are not very familiar with each other (Text C

\textsuperscript{25} It would be interesting to investigate more fully how ironies are understood if the participants are from different cultures, i.e., with a considerable difference of background knowledge.
and D) or are involved with each other only professionally (Text D).\textsuperscript{26} This leads us to expect a lower content of ironic instances in cases where a) the participants are not familiar with each other (Text C and D) and b) they cannot judge the make-up of their audience (Text D). The setting of a conversation and the familiarity among its participants are, therefore, a predictor of the frequency of ironic occurrences.

Up until now we have discussed the claim that the participants need to share knowledge about their mutual backgrounds. This is a necessary condition for an irony. The question now is, how do the participants recognize that an ironic occurrence has taken place?

2.3.2 Signals of Irony

The signals of irony have to be noticed by the participants in order to identify a statement as ironic. Furthermore, irony usually has more than just a single signal at a time. In most of the ironies that we have examined, several signals were simultaneously present. Some of the signals that were identified are listed in Figure 16:

\textsuperscript{26} I do not know about the familiarity among the speakers of Text D.
lengthening, cutting, ellipsis of words
juxtaposition of incongruent words/phrases/styles
words that belie the style
intonation: exaggerated, flat, understated
pitch-variations, stress
puns
allusion to prior occurrences
putting words into somebody's mouth
implications, unfounded presuppositions
disregard of intentions
wrong pretense
violation of norms
reference to culturally accepted presuppositions
statements contrary to expectations
choosing a touchy subject
insincerity
nonce-forms
metaphors
hyperboles
catchwords
Fremdwörter
double-talk and others

Figure 16

Let me make a few remarks here about the ironic tone of voice, involving changes in the intonation and stress pattern. Stress usually refers 'to the relative (acoustic) prominence that is given ... to particular words in phrases and to particular syllables in words' (Moulton 1962:113). The absence or exaggeration -- i.e., any kind of incongruence -- in the expected stress pattern is a potential signal for irony. The ironic tone of voice seems to affect syntactic stress in which 'the placement ... is meaningfully distinctive' (ibid. 115) rather than word stress. However, word stress used for ironic purposes cannot
be categorically excluded (e.g., mimicking a foreigner's speech pattern in order to be ironic). The ironist wants to affect a different reading incongruous with the "obvious" content of his message.

Stress thus refers to a loudness - intensity distinction. Intonation 'refers to patterns of voice pitch in speech' (ibid. 129) connected with rising and falling sequences. Intonation is not part of words per se but of larger units in discourse. In my discussion I have used an impressionistic description of intonation with the terms:

monotonous
flat
unmarked
understated
unemphatic
exaggerated etc.

My purpose was simply to convey that the intonation appears incongruous with the intonation expected for a non-ironic reading of the utterance rather than to give a precise phonological representation of the suprasegmental phonemes. Not every instance of irony, however, makes use of the ironic tone of voice. A change in the pattern does not necessarily indicate an ironic reading.

The ironic tone of voice has also been referred to by other theories in an impressionistic manner, exemplified by 'He sounded as if he did not mean it'. Jorgensen, Miller, and Sperber (1984)\textsuperscript{27}, contend that the ironic tone of voice

\textsuperscript{27} Cf. Mention Theory.
'is merely one of a variety of tones of voice (doubtful, approving, contemptuous, etc.) that speakers may use to indicate their attitudes toward the propositions mentioned' (1984:116). Sperber (1984:135) erroneously points out that the nuances of 'the ironic tone ... have been described by rhetoricians since classical antiquity'. Also the pretense theory pretends to have 'a natural account of the ironic tone of voice', namely, that in 'pretense or make-believe, people generally leave their own voices behind for new ones' (Clark and Gerrig 1984:122).

The features listed in Figure 16 function by no means uniquely as signals of irony. Figurative language, like metaphors, for example, is used in literature and spoken discourse for various purposes: e.g., aesthetics or ornamentation. Irony can make use of figurative language as well, but the occurrence of a metaphor or a nonce-form is not an indication that an ironic reading is expected.

The irony is embedded in the history of its occurrence. Irony depends on what people know and is conditioned by the moment of its instantiation. Due to its momentariness, irony becomes unique. It appears and then quickly disappears. Irony shifts the interpretation of the context. Irony is ephemeral, thus it is not a form but rather an experience. The main locus of irony is in the deictic content.
Even though irony does not sever the tie of expression and content, it displaces the interpretation, lets the already-existing subsist, but adds and juxtaposes something else. Just seeing the new product is not enough, it has to be seen in relation to the old (said), as an incongruence.

Irony employs signals (some of them were listed in Figure 16). The signals induce the hearer to search for ways of interpreting the said. However, a given form does not always warrant an ironic interpretation in all instances of its occurrence.

After the above discussion of the locus of irony, the participants, and the signals, a further question to ask is what are irony's functions, its purpose? The comedian Otto in Text A uses irony for the purpose of critical assessment of the world 'out there' and with that for entertainment. By entertaining, he maintains his popularity among his fans, and, thereby, increases his wealth and his fame as a
comedian. Text A is so completely permeated by irony that it would be difficult to separate out single instances. The ironies are not discrete. Irony functions here as an indicator of the 'non-serious'-mode.

In Text B, the interspersal of irony functions in part as a running commentary on the behavior at a party. The use of irony delimits the type of discussions. Serious discussions in this context are not accepted by the participants. One could claim that in the flow of spontaneous conversation, an irony creates a kind of tension or disturbance, and thereby view an ironist as being rather uncooperative in Gricean terms; that it is uncooperative in terms of furthering the flow of a conversation. But, the ironic occurrences in Text B have discourse furthering functions, and must therefore be seen as integral parts to the flow of the discourse in Text B.

Texts C and D do not rely on irony to the same extent as A and B. The audience does not expect ironic utterances. Once they occur, however, their function becomes clear. In C, Ruth draws all the participants together against the 'ugly' German tourists.28 The added unintended irony is, of course, that three of the four participants are Germans living abroad. Finally, in Text D, the irony can be said to

\[28\] A la Gott schütze uns vor Sturm und Wind und Deutschen, die im Ausland sind.
function mainly as a round-about way of shutting up a participant.

As we have seen in these four texts, irony appears as a device exploiting the participants' shortcomings and hang-ups of different sorts, among them:

1- taboos (scatological remarks (2), (4))
2- vulnerabilities ( (1), (2), (13))
3- sex (17)
4- delusions
5- doubts (7)
6- discomfort (7,8)
7- presuppositions (17)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>participant structure</th>
<th>Text A</th>
<th>Text B</th>
<th>Text C</th>
<th>Text D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>irony content</td>
<td>very high</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>very low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p1 - p3 familiarity</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>degree of P- familiarity</td>
<td>I.(cf. Fig. 15)</td>
<td>I.</td>
<td>I.</td>
<td>III.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shared background knowledge</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal P knowledge</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stimulus for irony</td>
<td>general</td>
<td>general, situational, situational and personal</td>
<td>situational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>purpose of irony</td>
<td>critical assessment of world 'out there', humor</td>
<td>commentary on party-mode, wit, humor</td>
<td>form solidarity-bond against common victim</td>
<td>silence a P</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 18
In Figure 18, the four chosen texts are compared diagrammatically.

The approach that I have taken can be referred to as the **Incongruence Approach**. The diagram in Figure 19 sets a background for the elaboration of this approach.

![Diagram showing context of culture, context of discourse, sign, utterance, and context of utterance]

**Figure 19**

Irony not only appears at the word and utterance level but has to be understood as applying to the whole discourse. The incongruence is produced on different spheres or levels of discourse. For example, incongruencies involving:

1 - words
    through juxtaposition of incongruous words
example: (9)
2 - styles
    juxtaposition of incongruous styles
    example: formal - colloquial (7)

3 - intonation
    utterance versus intonational pattern
    example: (4)

4 - utterances in context
    contrast of the interpretation of the utterance
    with the context (also: situational irony)
    example: (16, 17)

5 - contrasts of utterance with background knowledge
    example: (Otto's use of homily), etc.

The idea of incongruence includes opposition of a
surface and underlying reading, but does not necessarily
attach a binary (+/-) distinction to every word.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison of the Standard, Mention, and Pretense Theories to the Incongruence Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>STANDARD</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>literal reading is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opposed to a second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MENTION</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaker only mentions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>literal meaning,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the echoed material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mentioned is identified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRETENSE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaker mentions literal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meaning, speaker takes a role, i.e., pretends to be somebody else</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INCONGRUENCE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaker mentions literal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meaning which is incongruous in relation to another;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>incompatible elements are juxtaposed to elements of the same kind or to elements on other levels (cf. Figure 19), thus this approach also accounts for situational irony; pretense can be an incongruence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

only applied to written and performed texts, does not account for non-opposite cases

material echoed is necessary background information; does not involve unintended irony

situation, larger context not included a situation cannot pretend; irony only found in persons; does not involve unintended irony

description of irony involving opposition
description of ironic material on the word/utterance level
description of ironic material on the word/utterance level
descriptive account of all instances

**Figure 20**
Figure 20 presents diagrammatically the theories of irony discussed in Chapter One, and compares them to my Incongruence Approach.

2.4 Conclusion

The purpose of the above discussion has been to extend our understanding of irony from a linguistic point of view. The opposition feature found in the traditional definitions of irony was characterized as "saying something by meaning something else" -- usually, the opposite. This feature is maintained here as a property of irony. But features that establish incongruence of a number of types have been required in addition. Irony is more easily described or characterized from the perspective of what it does, and how it does it, than what it is. The attempt to extract similarities from the observations of ironic episodes in the four texts lead to the following:

An irony is for the most part an intended incongruence that has to be noticed in order to succeed. Irony is not direct. It would be non-ironic to announce, 'I am going to be ironic now'. This would either be considered inappropriate or suspected of harboring a hidden motive. Not all members of a speech community will overwhelmingly agree on the identification of an expression as ironic. Even in very close circles ironic instances are not always agreed
upon. Personal characteristics, idiosyncracies, and other variables always play an important role.

Irony can thus be characterized as a mode of discourse, which invokes, by some means, an underlying reading. The means or signals appear in overlapping sets, as we have seen in the analysis of actual texts. In order to decode an irony, a certain amount of shared knowledge is required. To be more precise, a participant in an irony has to be able to differentiate the signals of irony from similar or same signals that do not justify an ironic interpretation, i.e., the participant has to be able to notice the incongruence.
CHAPTER THREE. IRONY IN ITS CULTURAL CONTEXT

3.1 Introduction

The concept of irony has to be looked at from many different points of view. So far, I have included a discussion of the history of irony as well as its traditional treatment in rhetoric and literature. This is followed by a detailed analysis of German texts. A number of questions have become apparent in the discussion. I now turn to the question of how irony fits into a given culture.

A culture in its entirety is represented by the expressions of its people in such diverging areas as music, art, philosophy, architecture, fashion, social/political/economic system, approach to science, or to time, to name just a few. These features collectively are the trademark of a culture. Hence, emphasis is

on the spiritual possessions of the group rather than of the individual ... (Culture) aims to embrace in a single term those general attitudes, views of life, and specific manifestations of civilization that give a particular people its distinctive place in the world (Sapir 1949:83).

Culture becomes synonymous with 'spirit' or 'genius' of a people (ibid. 84). An outsider, then, approaching an unfamiliar culture, compares such features to those of his own culture and assesses the approached culture accordingly. Even though the expressions of a culture can be observed,
they are not necessarily easily noticed or internalized by an outsider.

The first contact with a new culture is usually made by attempting to master its language. Although language opens the door to a new culture, it is not its only key. Hall (1976:13/14) considers culture to be 'learned; the various facets of culture are interrelated - you touch culture in one place and everything else is affected; it is shared and in effect defines the boundaries of different groups'. A newcomer has to master not only the language but also has to place the language successfully into its cultural context. Textbook-learning only is artificial. 'The classroom is the only place where the classroom form of the language will be found' (ibid. 115).

Irony as one mode of cultural expression also has to be mastered. In order to decode an instance of irony, a language learner has to be very advanced in his cultural understanding. In general, language learners have major difficulties with colloquial speech, particularly with the understanding of puns, jokes, and, indeed, instances of irony. It is considerably easier and requires less time to manage specific expert languages than to manage colloquial speech. The latter requires more intense participation in and understanding of a community's cultural knowledge.

Each language and culture has its own particular way of expressing irony. Any type of advanced fieldwork, thus, has
to take irony or related concepts into account in order to get a correct and coherent picture of the language in the contexts of its use. Hall correctly observes the anthropologist's flawed assumption 'that an outsider can, within a matter of months or even years, adequately understand, explain and describe a foreign culture; and that he can transcend his own culture' (ibid.).

We can find concepts in other cultures that resemble our own conceptualizations of irony. By way of illustration, I will discuss perceived ironies in non-Western cultures and follow this discussion with an identification of the major roles of irony in German culture.

3.2 Irony in Non-Western Cultures

3.2.1 Amharic

David Levine discusses Amharic irony in *Wax and Gold*. *Sam-enna: warq* ('wax and gold'), composed of two different semantic layers, constitutes the favorite verse form of the Amhara.

The apparent figurative meaning of the words is called "wax;" their more or less hidden actual significance is the "gold" ... In verses which employ these figures the wax is often but a contrived and transparent excuse for getting to the real point (Levine 1965:5/6).

The listener only hears the wax, i.e., the surface form, and she has literally to scrape off the wax in order to get to the gold. Another way to express this figure is
westa wayra: ('the inside of an olive tree'). The olive tree stands for a tough but 'crackable' exterior and a soft interior, which gives the real meaning. 'Cracking' these figures gives pleasure to the poet and the audience. Among the Amhara those people that can encode as well as decode these figures truly know how to speak the language and achieve high prestige. There is a specific type of insult connected with these features, for example, when two friends seem to be insulting each other, but 'the real object of their abuse (is) ... a third party who is within earshot' (ibid. 250).

This type of double-layered speech has several implications for social interaction. Levine concludes that Amharics often like to evade questions and will not give real answers. An Amharic speaker considers it a type of punishment 'to stubbornly (withhold) ... his meaning from the audience through employing figures and allusions which no one can understand' (ibid. 230). Consequently, the Amhara will always try to listen for a hidden meaning. This can provide humor but can also be a means of indirectly insulting somebody. The indirect insult is the only permissible way to insult in Amharic. Any open insult is punishable. The wax-gold figure, furthermore, provides an outlet for criticism of the ruling class without the threat of repercussions.
The use of indirect criticism links all the examples that I am going to discuss.

3.2.2 Fiji

Brenneis (1984), for example, talks about an egalitarian speech community in Bhatgaon, a Fiji Indian community, where speakers have to resort to double talk in political discourse. Egalitarian societies have consensual decision making. 'The perils of direct leadership and confrontation in such societies often foster indirect, metaphoric, and highly allusive speech' (Brenneis 1984:70). So the male members of this society face the following dilemma: On the one hand, they are forced to act politically, on the other hand, they have to avoid the appearance of such action. Thus, they rely mainly on metaphors to get their points across without being obvious about it.

At a political meeting, a speaker resorts to religious speech (parbachan) as a front to talk politics. These parbachans are used to solve conflicts. The parbachans, hence, performed in 'Sweet Hindi', a non-colloquial version of the language, are allusive and ambiguous rather than direct. Certain subjects are brought up and discussed from a religious point of view. The audience knows that these subjects are signs of a potential conflict. At all cost, the
speaker tries to avoid direct accusations as this would have ill consequences for his cause.

Some audience members (the so-called primary audience) will be able to decode the underlying meaning. The speaker tries to influence the primary audience for his benefit. The secondary audience provides an element of evaluation and control. Even though they do not necessarily understand the second meaning involved, they share the knowledge of the cues for the second meaning. Cues can be particular topics, syntactic devices, usage of the indirect pronoun, to name a few. The community will not come to a final decision other than to let the facts speak.

3.2.3 Wana

The Wana, a farm-population of Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, also employ a figure of double-talk which expresses its meaning metaphorically. Its instantiation is a kiyori, a rather poetic form, whose main features are verbal disguise. For the Wana 'talk is action ... the accomplishments of ... discussions had more to do with creating and sustaining relationships among participants than with taking direct ... action' (Atkinson 1984:36). The so-called wrapped talk, hence, gives the Wana a way to disguise meaning in a very elegant way.

The kiyori, a 2-line stanza, with lines broken into two half-lines of eight syllables each is highly stylized. The
'interpretation [of kiyori] requires knowledge of context, discussant, and motives' (ibid. 39). An adult male either composes or dreams a kiyori. As a dream (spiritual), a kiyori can also be presented by women or younger males.

Kiyoris are presented at social gatherings. The higher the social status of the performer, the easier it will be for him to find an audience. Kiyoris are created on the spot and at first spoken while imperfect, i.e., the performer makes several attempts to start. These false starts function to get attention. Just as in any type of irony, kiyori 'delivery tends to be spontaneous and proved difficult ... to anticipate and record' (ibid. 41); it is, however, retellable because of its strongly prescribed form.

'... the kiyori offers a way to disguise meaning, to say something indirectly in an elegant way' (ibid.). Presenting a kiyori, a speaker attempts to strengthen and offer friendship, to advise, and to criticize, while avoiding direct confrontation. 'Wana are on the whole extremely timid about confronting each other directly in an antagonistic manner ... (critical) kiyori ... are more likely to be dreamed or told to others of like mind than posed to the antagonist himself' (ibid. 57).

The main features of kiyoris are vagueness, which 'serves as a means to avoid opposition and conflict, while at the same time conveying an impression of cleverness and profound insight' (ibid. 60). Kiyoris aimed at another
person are usually told to a sympathetic audience. The purpose of a kiyori is to build up solidarity in a potential conflict situation.

3.2.4 Namoizamanga

Also the Namoizamanga of Madagascar try to avoid direct confrontation by all means. Kabary, a formal type of discourse, 'functions on two levels at once. On one level, it is concerned with the ritual at hand ... and on a second level it is a forum displaying the skill and knowledge of the speakers' (Keenan 1974:128). Criticism is expressed through proverbs and parables, no direct requests or accusations are expressed. The conversational context, however, gives the clue. A sudden change in the topic, for example, means, 'Please understand this as meaning something else'.

A speaker performing kabary stands out, which is to be avoided in an egalitarian society. So, he prefaces his performance with an apology for his lack of ability, and, moreover, stresses that the words are not his own, therefore, not accepting responsibility.

This rule of indirectness only applies to men. Woman can express anger, disagreement, etc., in direct speech. Men only experience one situation in which they do not employ indirect speech mode, and this is when giving orders to animals. These orders, however, are given in French.
A male member of the community is said to speak well when he twists words, 'like paint, one returns twice and makes it darker' (ibid. 140) The indirect speech form includes the use of proverbs, traditional sayings, and elaborate metaphors.

The Namoizamanga do not give specific information, as everybody shares everything and thus does not need to know. '... possession of new information is possession of a scarce good allowing the possessor to command the attention of others' (Keenan and Ochs 1979:149). Under no circumstances does a Namoizamanga want to commit himself. If a said occurrence does not take place, a Namoizamanga feels shame. Since we are influenced by our own Western ideals, we would interpret their behavior as uncooperative and avoiding.

3.2.5 Mangalese

Similarly, the Mangalese of Papua, New Guinea, also use a form of indirect discourse, which they call ha'a. Ha'a particularly finds its use in negotiations to avoid offense, to hide 'the substance of ... discussions from others who are not directly involved' (McKellin 1984:108) and to test opinions or elicit support for the speaker's position without having to take a public stance. The indirectness is a feature of speech among equals. As soon as the scale of equality changes, direct insults can be the result.
The characteristics of the ha'a is the speaker's use of many short, studied phrases in conjunction with a falling pitch at the end of a word. In addition, indirection in discourse is realized through metaphors, whose meaning depends on the context, and, furthermore, motifs from myths and songs. The 'knowledge of metaphors is largely dependent on the speakers kinship relations and his ownership of land' (ibid. 111). The decoding of the indirect discourse depends on shared knowledge and familiarity with the structure of discourse and with the speaker's background. As we have already seen with the Wana, the Mangalese also consider dreams indirect communication.

In a ha'a some information can be strung together to draw 'the listener's attention to particular pieces of information in the story' (ibid. 117). Certain parts of the text are repeated for the listener to notice its importance. '... the events are told, not in a single sequence, but in clusters or planes' (ibid.). The ha'a functions to test opinions and elicit support for the speaker's opinion without requiring him to take a public position.

3.2.6 Ilongot

In Ilongot oratory the indirect style ('crooked language') indicates again a basic feature of an egalitarian society. The 'crooked language', rich in art, wit, and
indirection, includes body-motion and self-reference, and is used in humor as well as conflict.

The Ilongot-speakers differentiate three categories of speech: straight speech, invocatory speech, and crooked speech (cf. Rosaldo 1973). Invocatory speech uses hyperbolic metaphors, redundant rhythms, and stereotyped lines for the purpose of lectures. The latter has certain formal features, e.g., iambic stress, phonological elaborations, metaphors, repetition, and puns for the purpose of hiding the actual meaning. The speaker distances himself therewith from the said. In consequence, a distance is created between the speaker as an individual and as a social being.

3.2.7 Discussion

We find many more examples that could be interpreted as irony: the so-called 'mother-in-law-languages' of the Australian Aborigines (c.f. Haviland 1979), the 'chief language' of the Panamanian Kuna (c.f. Sherzer 19), the Mexican Chamulas 'frivolous' language (c.f. Gossen 1974), etc.

So far I have said that irony functions as an expression of culture. It is an interactive mode evoking an underlying reading while at the same time, letting the literal reading co-exist. It does this by means of signals, which appear in sets. In order to be successful, an irony
has to be detected. However, it can only be noticed if the participants share the requisite knowledge.

In each of the examples discussed above, we find that shared knowledge is a very important factor for the decoding of the double-layered speech. In this type of speech some secondary message is hidden, and the second meaning has to be found. Brenneis (1987) terms the double-layered speech indirection,\(^1\) which is 'a way of speaking in which meaning can only be determined by going beyond the literal' (1987:499).

In egalitarian societies, egalitarianism is not applied to everybody, therefore, 'social and political relations are constantly being negotiated and tested' (ibid. 501). All the communities stress verbal performance. Indirection, including obliqueness, vagueness, and ambiguity, characterizes the speech. The speaker means more than he says and by means of being indirect he avoids responsibility, and, if he speaks artfully, is admired by his listeners. Because to speak one's mind clearly is to be a 'hard' or brave man, but a foolish one' (ibid. 504).

Each speech-community employs different ways of signalling that the conversation has to be taken with a twist. The Amharic's verse form signals this through figures of speech; the Fiji Indians resort to metaphors, allusions,

\(^1\) I am thankful to Jane Hill for pointing out this article.
religious topics, specific syntactic devices and the use of
the indirect pronoun; whereas the Mangalese's signals are
nonce forms and motifs from myths and songs. Further, both
the Wana and the Namoizamanga use very stylized verse forms
in order to disguise meaning. Even though the signals differ
considerably, from informal to rather stylized, an
interpretation along the lines proposed here, namely ironic,
can not be discounted.

Regardless of the fact that the cultures approach this
quest in slightly different ways, all share a common
purpose, namely, to save face by avoiding any open
disagreement. Indirection becomes a way of life, it pervades
the culture.

Each example I discussed has a term or a metaphorical
expression for what we call irony. The Amharics name it
wax-and-gold. In the Bhatgaon community one differentiates
between Sweet Hindi and the local dialect, subsuming under
the former indirection of speech. With the Wana and the
Namoizamanga, the phenomenon is called kiyorì or kabary
respectively. The Wana furthermore refer to this type of
speech as 'wrapped', whereas the Namoizamanga call it
'twisted'. The Mangalese call their form of indirect
rhetoric ha'a. Suara kuaraman is the term for speech
indirection in general. Thus each society recognizes a
specifically ironic form of speech.
As I have mentioned before, one unifying factor of the above treated instances of ironic discourse is their common purpose, i.e., to form bonds and to save face. Usually, a certain group is addressed that shares background-knowledge and others are kept from understanding. Cultures, speech-communities, a close circle of friends, a married couple, all have mechanisms at their disposal to keep others from understanding, i.e., to keep others 'out'. A description from an outside standpoint might, therefore, not be correct. The account will always be one of an outsider. Ideally, a researcher would have to give up his/her own identity and merge completely into the culture to be described. Particularly female researchers in a male dominated society, or a society where the double-talk is only a feature of male speech will experience problems in the attempt to understand a culture.

The understanding of irony, jokes, etc., is probably the last bastion to a foreign language and culture, hence, difficult to decode for an outsider. All five of the above accounts are given by outsiders. Thus even underlying assertions are in fact often approachable for a foreigner. All aspects of language are involved: like physical attributes and gestures, tone, pitch, level of excitement, speed, length of breath groups and pauses as well as a whole vocabulary of body language, all of which are essential to the understanding of our fellow speakers. Physical qualities
surrounding speech can even take precedence over the content. An author (Canetti) notes on visiting a foreign country, 'I did not understand what they were saying but to judge from their faces, they were discussing the affairs of the world' (cf. Barbe/Hill 1985).

What Brenneis terms indirection applies equally to irony. It is clear that irony has a feature of indirection which is also involved in what I have called incongruence.

We have seen that instances of irony in non-Western cultures can be seen as quite different from our Western view of irony. Is irony thus a universal phenomenon? Whenever we find some kind of possibility of misunderstanding in a language, which is not based on language external factors like obstructing noises, we have discovered the locus of ambiguity. Language-induced misunderstandings then can be used by a speaker for indirection purposes. Thus any language that allows for misunderstandings has also the potential of harboring irony.

3.3 Some major functions of irony in German culture

In addition to the functions of irony in German culture that were discussed in Chapter Two, I will now identify some functions of irony in German culture that point to as of yet unsolved problems. Irony is frequently involved in covert discussions of subject matter, that cannot be discussed overtly. In particular, irony is used for its indirection in
order to deal with Germany's recent political past (1933 - 1945). The ironic discourse directed towards the Nazi past is considered taboo inside as well as outside of Germany. In order to justify this claim, I will now introduce some contemporary German cartoons, and a recent speech to the German Bundestag.

Cartoons are made for a very specific audience in a particular language area. Only a few foreign cartoons (e.g., those by Trudeau, Charles Addams, Sempé, Claire Brecher) have in fact also appeared in German language versions. Just as the relative nontransferability of cartoons from language to language indicates that cartoons are tied very closely to the culture of their inception. Cartoons deal with any subject that appears to affect human interaction, either to amuse, or to criticize or both.

An ironic instance found in a cartoon -- and cartoons are basically sustained by irony -- points, (a) the culture-specificity of cartoons and (b) the culture-specificity of the irony embedded in the cartoons. All of the cartoons discussed in this section were chosen for their colloquial language. In Waechter's cartoon (Figure 1) the language, and the concepts involved, can only be understood within the context of the German language and culture. They do not easily allow transference or paraphrase.
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These consist of pages:

117, Figure 1
119, Figure 2
120, Figure 3
122, Figure 4
124-125, Figure 5
In this cartoon many phrases are very loaded. Päckchen nach drüben denotes the seemingly never-ending 'Care parcels' from West-Germany to East-Germany. This also fixes the time of the cartoon as after August 13, 1961, when the Berlin Wall was constructed. Only few West Germans do not have the responsibility of sending care packages to relatives in the East and, therefore, most everybody can sympathize with the robber's association of Geld abheben --- Päckchen nach drüben. This cartoon bases its humor and irony on a common German experience, namely, the problems associated with East
- West German relations, and their repercussions in everyday life.

Thus in Figure 1 we encounter the following implications:

- awareness of the East - West division
- the troublesome parcel sending
- the association of Geld abheben --> Päckchen nach drüben
- Päckchen nach drüben as an institution
- the loaded term drüben

The irony expressed does address problematic East - West relations, and further illustrates how language, and the awareness of the problem interferes with the robber's profession and even causes him not to succeed.

The following cartoon by Heinrich Zille (Figure 2) gives us a glimpse of the social conditions in the Berlin of the late 19th century or early 20th century. Zille's cartoons are very time-bound in what they picture, but timeless in the sentiment they express.

In a Stube-Küche, a family is gathered around the table. The children are anemic due to bad air, too much humidity, a lack of sun, and malnutrition. The little boy is doing his homework; the subject of his essay is marriage. The humor and the irony of the cartoon are expressed in the clash of social understandings and the romantic idea of love as generally associated with marriage. The mother explains
that she and his father did not get married because they do not really like each other ('Marriage presupposes love'.)

Nevertheless, they have been living together for nine years, and have produced a houseful of illegitimate offspring. With this cartoon, Zille takes aim at the lack of feeling and the ignorance of civil servants, here exemplified by the teacher, who is not aware of the childrens' miserable domestic situation.

Figure 2
Poth's cartoon reaches into the 1970s. This time-bound cartoon (Figure 3) depicts the 1968-generation making money and pursuing a career, while trying to maintain their 60s persona and political consciousness. Even though they still sympathize with the political left, they have found their niche in a capitalistic society. The irony, and with it the humor, lies in a particular problem, i.e., open relationships. In the 1960s such relationships were very much 'in', and some people were still trying to make them work in the 1970s. They failed miserably. Failures of this sort point to the 68-generation's shocking realization that deep down, they might be just as conservative as their parents.

While in the 70s the 68-generation tried to fulfill their socialist ideals within the confines of the existing political system they had once fought, in the 80s, they become introverted and very concerned with their own psychological and physical well-being. Nutrition, then, becomes a major concern. The impact of Wössner's cartoon (Figure 4) is very dependent on its temporal setting. It appeared soon after April 28, 1986 -- the Chernobyl disaster. Wössner depicts the intellectual, university-educated, organic food freak in a supermarket. Before
Chernobyl, the protagonist, an Alternativier\(^2\), had only frequented health-food stores. Now we see him happily gazing at homogenized milk from South-Africa and spinach from Chile -- both of them countries whose food imports he had no doubt boycotted earlier. And this is precisely where the irony and the humor lies, namely in the juxtaposition of his appearance and all it stands for with the supermarket and all it in turn represents.

Figure 4

\(^2\) i.e., a proponent of an alternative life style.
Finally, Becker shows in Figure 5 the further development of the 68-generation from young freedom fighter (Revoluzzer) to tainted conformist to Alternative, and now involved in Indian philosophy and the teachings of a guru. The cartoon is heavily interspersed with buzzwords. Selbstfindung becomes more important than social problems. Even though the participants like Swami Deva Rudolf and his girlfriend are supposedly working for their inner peace, they do it very selfishly to the neglect of the other participants' needs (compare, for example, their use of the entire living room for Tai Chi practice). Becker's cartoon is filled with criticism, and Becker herself seems to identify with Ingrid, the Studienreferendarin, the only 'sane' person, unimpressed by the Swami and cursing the macrobiotic food.
3.3.1 Discussion

These cartoons, in particular Poth's, Wössner's, and Becker's cartoons show the preoccupation of the German intellectuals with their persistent problems within a capitalist environment.³

We find irony on the level of
- the utterance
- the situation
- the cartoon as a whole
- the cartoon as an expression of popular culture.

The irony points to the incompatibility of ideals with the reality found in Germany today.

By selecting these cartoons I have chosen to describe only one specific group of the many in the context of German culture. But I want to add here that this group is also very self-critical, as evidenced by the self-descriptive cartoons.

In the following I want to address by means of irony a deep seated fear in the German experience. This fear has re-surfaced in the public discussion after a speech by Philipp Jenninger given at the 50th anniversary celebration of the Reichskristallnacht.

³ Cf. Ebert 5.2.4.
Philipp Jenninger, the then Bundestagspräsident, delivered an address in commemoration of the Reichskristallnacht to the German Bundestag.\textsuperscript{4} His speech was widely misunderstood, and the criticism ran the whole gamut from antisemitism to praise for Hitler. Particularly, foreign sources had already been suspecting a revival of Nazi politics. Germany, especially the BRD, seems constantly to be observed and scrutinized for signs of resurgent antisemitism. For example, the following statement appeared in Milano's Corriere della Sera 'Hitler brachte uns phantastische Zeiten: Der Antisemitismus explodiert erneut im deutschen Parlament' (Die Zeit, Nov. 25, 1988).

Jenninger's discourse failed partly because he did not consider the diversity of his audience. Ironic remarks were taken literally and his attempt to explain the reasons for the period of 1933-45 were taken as a distraction from guilt. Irony is thus not viewed as appropriate when Germans are dealing with their recent past, because it so easily misfires, or is misinterpreted.

In this connection we may note that after 1945 many German writers felt very uncomfortable about writing in their own language, because it had been violated and misused in the cause of fascism.

\textit{Die Betroffenheit einiger Schriftsteller ... enthält auch sprachliche Bezüge, die es schier unmöglich machen, in einer Sprache zu}

schreiben, die man gleichzeitig als Werkzeug des Mißbrauchs, der Verführung oder der Lüge erkennt (Braun 1987:223).

German was the language of the "monster", the Nazis had polluted and adapted the language to their own misguided political ends. Language can be a loaded gun, (cf. also a recent book by Bolinger called Language the loaded weapon).

One of the major problems confronting Germans today is the 12 years from 1933 - 1945. The attempt to come to grips with the past and to learn from the past is valued but often problematic, on the other hand, the neglect of the problem is also criticized. Whichever choice is made, ultimately somebody considers it to be offensive.

Seidel (1961), who writes about language in the Third Reich, contends that irony is not allowed in public writings, because that would show that issues have several sides, and that is to be avoided. This sentiment is obviously still intact.

By means of selected examples, I have tried to illustrate how irony functions in German culture, in a particular group as well as in general. Irony points to unsolved and often unsolvable problems, which here are the missing Vergangenheitsbewältigung of the 68-generation as well as the German people as a whole. We have discussed

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5 I use Vergangenheitsbewältigung because it is such a buzzword in German popular culture.
irony here as an expression of cultural critique, showing the incongruities of life.

3.4 Conclusion

Let me end here by pointing to an interesting problem in the cross-cultural treatment of irony. Instances of irony are noticed by means of their signals. The use of irony differs in the various cultures, I have mentioned, i.e., the usages only partially overlap. In English speech communities, irony is differentiated from similar figures like lie, pun, and allegory. The boundaries between irony and lie will vary in different cultures. This phenomenon becomes particularly problematic in translation. Translation thus becomes very important for identifying cultural differences expressed through languages.
CHAPTER FOUR. IRONY IN TRANSLATION

4.1 Introduction

... when translation is properly understood as something more than mere decoding, we realize that it suggests ... other ways of being in the world. (Tyler 1978:70)

Ironic is a general concept that must be viewed as transcending the boundaries of a language. In order to demonstrate this property of irony, it will be necessary to examine the nature of the means of effecting or testing the transcendence, i.e., translation. Inter-language as well as intra-language translation inevitably invoke restatement or paraphrase from one medium to another. Understanding one thing in terms of another is inherently involved in paraphrasing, metaphor, allegory, parable, etc., i.e., in any concept that uses duality to enable interpretation. 'Reading irony *is* in some ways like translating, like decoding, like deciphering, and like peering behind a mask' (Booth 1974:33).

Translation focuses attention on features in the source language (SL) as well as in the target language (TL). Most contributors to the literature from Cicero (c.f. Wilss 1981, Bassnett-McGuire 1980), Luther (1523) and Schleiermacher (c.f. Störig 1973), to Wilss (1981) and Newmark (1981 & 88) agree that a translator has two basic choices. She either chooses (1) to retain the foreign character of the discourse
(Cicero's \textit{ut interpres}), or (2) to adapt it as closely as possible to the target culture (Cicero's \textit{ut orator}). Such choice varies with the demands of the particular translation. The translator assesses each conversation or text as to the intentions of its speaker or author, the intended audience, etc., before either method can be adopted. Regardless of the path taken, the discourse itself has to be analyzed and understood by the translator, i.e., at the same time interpreted.\footnote{In the translation literature, we encounter the two terms 'translation' and 'interpretation'. The latter refers to a rendition from oral language (German \textit{dolmetschen}), whereas the former involves the transference of written material and/or translation in the broad rather than generic sense, and then including interpretation. A further sense of interpretation stands for the interpretation of literature, i.e., analyzing levels of meaning in a work of literature. I will make use of these terms in the following way: The texts (A - D) will be interpreted in both of the above senses of 'interpret'.}

In this chapter, spoken texts (Texts A, B, C, and D) will be analyzed from a different point of view, namely: What is the potential for translating the text into English, and how can such translation further the understanding of the concept of irony in spoken discourse? What can the analysis tell us about the language differences and about the different spectra of irony in both languages? How closely is irony bound to its cultural instantiation as well as the immediate context of its use? I will preface the
analysis with a general discussion of the problems in translation.

4.2 On Translation

In a translation we can see the relationship among languages 'weit tiefer und bestimmter als in der oberflächen und undefinierbaren Ähnlichkeit zweier Dichtungen' (Störig 1973:186). Each language realizes the relationship between content and means of expression differently. Nida (1959) adds, that languages embody different concepts and underlying principles, e.g., different views of past and future. Furthermore, their semantic patterns, grammatical constructions, and idiomatic descriptions are not congruent. Hence, a TL and a SL text will never be completely equivalent.

Compare in this respect also Diller and Kornelius (1978), who do not consider translation to be a purely linguistic enterprise 'weil in die Produktion von Texten auch eine Kenntnis der außersprachlichen Welt ein(geht), die beim Empfänger des Textes vorausgesetzt wird und ohne die Textverstehen infolgedessen nicht möglich ist' (Diller, Kornelius 1978:1).²

Peter Newmark (1981 and 1988) stresses the importance and centrality of the translator. In a translation not only

² Feuer either 'want a light' or 'fire'.
the translator and the text come together but also the
translator and the SL-author, the SL-culture, the SL-speech,
and SL-writing-styles. Hence, one individual interprets
another individual's thoughts, ideas, writings, etc.

In Wilss' (1981) treatment of translation, the
translator only plays a marginal role. Wilss inadequately
translates Schleiermacher's Übersetzungswissenschaft as The
Science of Translation (Wilss 1981:52). The German term
Wissenschaft is by far a more general term than its English
equivalent 'science', which basically denotes the natural
sciences. By calling it a science, Wilss severs
translation's ties with the translator, implying somehow
that by merely pursuing a particular scientifically oriented
model, the translator will be able to give a good
translation. Why is the translator kept out of the picture?
Should translation theory be considered a science just
because a more mathematical approach is pursued? Did the
move to a more formalized approach bring any progress into
translation research? As of yet -- no. Wilss claims
incorrectly that the 'lack of a strongly defined theory and
methodology in the science of translation is related to the
fact that it is a young science' (ibid.). Translations have
been produced and the subject has been dealt with for many
centuries.

And yet, the central issue of translation is still the
same, ut interpres or ut orator, primary or secondary
translation (cf. Diller and Kornelius 1978), to give a newer
term, i.e., should the SL-text be adapted to the
TL-audience, or should the TL-text reflect the
characteristics of the SL. Few, if any, advances have been
made since the times of Cicero, Luther, Schleiermacher, or
Schopenhauer. Thus, each text should be considered on its
own merits by the translator, i.e., translation on a text by
text basis seems to be the general consensus.

Translation is a creative activity (excluding special
purpose translations). The translator has to recreate the
original in the TL. A movie-translator is even termed
Synchron-Autor thus expressing the (re)-creation-process
already in the title. The translator has to bring a piece of
text close to an audience for which it was originally not
intended. A translator should try to translate a text in a
way that satisfies her ideas of both the SL - and also TL -
practice of interaction with texts. She does not only need
to be to some degree bilingual but she also needs knowledge
of both cultures. Seeing a chance to improve a SL-text in
the TL, she might take advantage of it, because she has to
sign her name to the translation.\(^3\) The translation, thus,
can take on its individual life as much as the original has
its own life. In this regard, I also want to point to
Luther's Bible translations, which influenced the further

\(^3\) I am reminded here of American movies and TV-shows that
were only successful in a translated version.

In all instances, however, the translator puts her personal stamp including all prejudices and preconceptions into a translation. All translation is subjective and the encoder's view of the world is always an integral part. Newmark (1981) illustrates this point by comparing translations by East and West German translators, which showed major discrepancies, predominantly due to different ideological backgrounds. For example, helping people to flee the GDR is a criminal offense in East Germany but is officially supported in the West. An East-German translator would call this process Menschenhandel ('slave-trade'), whereas a West German translator would term it Fluchthilfe (refugee-help or smuggling). Thus Menschenhandel versus Fluchthilfe illustrates our inability to leave cultural and ideological influences at home. How could we, anyway, as we are probably not even aware of them? A translator cannot avoid to interpret at the same time as she translates.

In addition, we find instances of untranslatability: The following joke, e.g., circulated in Germany during the time of a chemical spill into the Rhine near Basel.

(1)

Welches ist der sauberste Fluß der Welt?
Which is the cleanest river in the world?
Der Rhein, er wurde chemisch gereinigt.
The Rhine, it was dry cleaned (chemically cleaned)
This joke seems virtually untranslatable while keeping its ironic flavor. Chemisch reinigen, literally 'chemically cleaned' (which seems to be a contradiction in terms), means 'dry cleaned'. The word game depends on the ambiguity of chemisch reinigen, which cannot be transferred.

Not only the Rhine but also the Danube has inspired many a song praising its beauty, for example, the Johann Strauss waltz An der schönen blauen Donau. This song has been spoofed to An der schönen grauen Donau. In translation the 'blue Danube' of the former changes to the 'grey Danube' of the latter. A translator, however, not familiar with the song will just translate 'at the banks of the beautiful grey Danube'. Part of the irony in this statement can still be seen in the juxtaposition of 'beautiful' and 'grey'. But the important reference to the song is not made.

A recent article by D. Zimmer 'Vom Rattenrennen zum Menü' (Die Zeit 1985) discusses aspects of Americanisms in the German language. Zimmer deals particularly with borrowings (Menü) and loan translations (Rattenrennen). Furthermore, he addresses stereotypes (Routineformeln) which come to be translated verbatim.

The closing formula of an American English 'Nice meeting you' has no equivalent in German and a translation at the time of departure to habe mich gefreut, Ihre

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Bekanntschaft zu machen is often encountered with a frown and the hostile comment *Sie sind ja vielleicht amerikanisiert*. The 'nice meeting you'-phrase, nevertheless, does have a place in German verbal stereotypical interaction, namely, after an initial introduction as *sehr erfreut* ('nice to meet you'). In other words, the cultural context is decisive.

As Coulmas (1981:82) contends, verbal stereotypes do not necessarily overlap in the various languages. A translation, therefore,

*die den Routinecharakter nicht reproduziert, (ist) keine adäquate Übersetzung ... Dieser (Routinecharakter) läßt sich jedoch oft nur bestimmen, wenn bekannt ist, welchen Applikationsbereich eine Formel abdecken können soll, und relativ zu was für Situationen sie Routine sein soll.*

Hence, for a German *Nice meeting you* does not make any sense as a closing formula. Equally *das macht keinen Sinn* does not make sense in German, whereas *das verstehe ich nicht* would be more appropriate. A German *Punkt* is a mark of punctuation or a dot. The 'point' of 'I can see your point' should be translated with *Stand-/Ausgangspunkt* depending on the context. Finally, a *Rattenrennen* seems to be a macabre sport, but sooner or later it will (if it not already has done so) take over the meaning of the English idiom in 'join the ratrace'. There are numerous other examples where potential semantic changes might come about and problems
appear with cognates that have taken on different connotations.

A foreigner who speaks the language of her host country fluently will become aware of transference problems as soon as she tries to translate an idiom literally from her native tongue into the TL, which can be very amusing for TL-speakers. An American '6-pack' is not yet a German Sechspack, a possible loan translation. In Germany the beer usually comes in bottles, only recently have cans been used.

Furthermore, a translator can consider the different honorific systems an obstacle. In 'The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity', Brown and Gilman (1972) discuss the significance of formal and familiar address in languages that have overt markers for those, namely, German, French, and Spanish. A 'power-semantics' appears, those in power use familiar forms, whereas those not in power use the formal forms. This differentiation is said to have originated during times of monarchy, where the king is the representative of all people and is, henceforth, referred to and addressed in the plural. Solidarity appears in the address of equals, i.e., a mutual Sie or du. Differences of all kinds between people are shown through those pronouns. We have, therefore to look at relationships between people and see if they are symmetrical (solidarity) or asymmetrical.

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5 Actually, beer in cans is sold in 4-packs.
(power). These different honorific systems, of course, pose a problem in translation, as they are not equivalent among the languages. There are still many more examples of problematic translations that cannot be dealt with here.⁶

It becomes important to analyze and describe what it is a translator does when she approaches a text. I believe, that a set of questions the translator should ask herself before starting a translation might be more helpful than any prescriptive or even 'scientific' method. The following catalogue of questions and issues to be considered grew out of the problems discussed in relevant publications and out of my own translation experience and can be amended or changed.

A. Approaching a text in the SL

a. analysis and understanding of the text

b. arrangement of the text in time and space (for example, put 60s American slang in perspective to German slang), can the setting be changed?

c. assessment of the supposed audience in SL (who is it the author wants to reach/not wants to reach? can and should the intended audience in the TL be expanded or limited?)

d. where is the translation going to appear? is it independent of a paper and its style (writing for Bild or Die Zeit⁷) can mistakes in the original be changed, or do they have to be kept, i.e., does a translator also edit?

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⁶ See Friedrich 1969 for a more detailed coverage.

⁷ Bild-Zeitung is a very popular, sensational-type newspaper which is easy to read. Die Zeit, on the other hand, requires a more educated reader.
e. how are cultural differences treated? how many
differences can be kept? which differences should be
leveled? how can the text be put in the appropriate cultural
context?

f. is there a difference in ideological backgrounds from the
SL-author?

g. what is the nature of a text?

B. Actual translation

a. word-by-word, sentence-by-sentence vs. holistic approach;
ut interpres or ut orator?

b. metaphor -> metaphor or need of paraphrase, illustration,
other figures of speech, irony, etc.

c. rendition of placenames: Bayern or Bavaria, Martha's
Vinyard vs. Martha's Weingarten

d. rendition of names: Hans vs. John, Peter vs. Pierre, Hinz
und Kunz vs. John, Dick and Harry

e. should a dialect be kept? (Eliza Doolittle of Shaw's
Pygmalion speaks Berlinerisch in the German version)

f. time-transfer, datedness of language: Herrin vs. mistress
g. gender: das Schiff, es vs. the ship, she (cf. also
Jakobson 1959:235 ff.)

The above discussion of translation in general will be
used to give us insight into the phenomenon of irony. If we
consider irony a general concept, we should be able to
translate it, too. Translation attempts can provide more
information about the languages involved than just the
analysis of one single language. The comparison and contrast
can alert to features otherwise not considered important.

Translation or interpretation of metaphors and irony,
for instance, be it in oral discourse or not, shows the
embeddedness of these concepts in the context of the utterance, the situation, and last but not least the culture. Translation should proceed from cultural context to cultural context. The flavor of the SL text has to be presevered and irony is a factor that gives a text its flavor. As will be shown in the following treatment of the texts, disregarding instances of irony will falsify the message of a text.

4.3 Translation of Texts A, B, C, and D into English

Translation functions to distribute knowledge across language boundaries (cf. Bassnett-McGuire 1980). Irony as an integral part of this knowledge requires recognition and realization in the TL. Each utterance -- in dependency on the context -- can be understood either at face-value or as ironic.

Whichever interpretation she chooses depends on the hearer. The TL-reader/hearer has to be provided with the same options as the SL-reader/hearer. Therefore, the tone and flavor of a SL-text has to be preserved in the TL-version. Neglecting the ironic mode of the original, a translator falsifies the message. The translation of irony proves a difficult venture in many instances. In order to show the difficulties encountered, I will again compare the four texts of Chapter Two.
We should keep in mind the following two questions:

1 - What are the specific translation problems of each example?

2 - Will the irony that has been noticed in the German instance still be detectable in its translation?

4.3.1 Text A

Following our basic requirement, namely, that a translation has to preserve the ironic flavor of a text, we soon encounter difficulties with Text A. The nature of the text -- pre-composed, highly ironic, hence highly culture specific -- prevents a complete, successful translation.

To begin with, the American TV, with its multitude of purely religious channels and, moreover, religious broadcasts on the commercial channels does not broadcast a show comparable to Das Wort zum Sonntag. The altered phrase (Das Wort zum Montag) as used by the comedian translates easily, but the connotations can not be transferred.

Figures of speech like Sorgen und Nöte, mit billigem Trost, or die Last des Alltags have to be translated as a unit (cf. Coulmas 1981, p. 55 ff.). These verbal stereotypes function to signify the speech of a minister which distinguishes itself by the frequent use of platitudes.

The focal passage of the minister's exposition tops off his shallowness. We are at a loss when attempting to translate
not so much because of its constituent words but rather because of the invoked cultural context. The decoding of this particular culture and time bound phrase requires adequate familiarity with German popular culture. Otto meditates over this line, talks on and on, and plays with the words that come along his way. *Theo, wir fahr'n nach Lodz* could perhaps be more successfully translated into an adequate song-title of the Country and Western Tradition.\(^8\)

Furthermore, we discover here that names do signify and characterize their bearers to a limited extent, and that irony can be thus expressed. And yet, names often remain unaltered in translation. In this case, however, *Herbert, Franz und Willy* have certain connotations (blue collar, working class, the people who drink [kaf]), which cannot be transferred into another cultural context when leaving them unaltered. To a certain extent they correspond to the AE 'Tom, Dick and Harry'. A back-translation (AE\(^9\) -> Gm) would not necessarily yield *Herbert, Franz und Willy*, as they do not exist as a comparable stock phrase in German, but rather *Hinz und Kunz*.

\(^8\) I leave it to the reader to think about this.

\(^9\) AE = American English, Gm = German
Surprisingly enough, some of the word games transfer easily into AE, for instance,

(3)
Aber um welchen Theo handelt es sich?
But which Theo is it?
Ist es nicht auch jener Theo in uns Allen?
Is it not the Theo in us all?
Jener Theo, der in so wunderbaren Worten vorkommt wie
The Theo, who appears in such wonderful words as
Theologie,
thology
Theodorant,
theodorant
Tee oder Kaffee.
tea or coffee?

Close historical ties and development of English and German, and their comparable reliance on similar borrowings from languages of high prestige, namely Latin and Greek, accounts, at least partly, for the easy transfer.

But Otto's further meditation on the verse leaves us speechless, at least in English:

(4)
wir : vier
[v] [f]

Although the phonemic opposition /v/ - /f/ also exists in AE, and wir : 'we', vier : 'four' are cognates, the word game cannot be transferred. Consequently, the irony expressed by an exposition on the pronoun wir cannot be duplicated.

In addition, Text A contains certain phrases which prove difficult to translate not because of their ironic content but rather because AE does not have a close equivalent, for instance, Da ist ... die Rede or ist
gemaient. However, these problems can be overcome by paraphrase and do not impair general understanding.

All in all, a text like A draws heavily on preconceived notions decodable only by participants reasonably familiar with the context of its inception and formation. We assume that the amount of presupposed cultural knowledge coincides with the occurrence of ironic instances. In other words, the more irony we find, the more cultural knowledge is presupposed, and the more difficulties will be experienced in translation. Considered as a unit, any text like A has to be recreated rather than translated in order to transfer the given scenario accurately. To a large extent, Otto uses verbal stereotypes, culturally pre-scribed and pre-determined situations (here: homily), and distorts them for humorous purposes.

The following three texts differ from A in the number of ironic occurrences. Text B, in opposition to Text A, a spontaneous, not pre-composed conversation, is illustrated in detail by means of representative examples.
4.3.2 Text B

(5)
S: war ne richtige adhoc Sache irgendwie wa
(this) was a real adhoc decision somehow
M: ja spontaan nich Andrea, ha ha
yeah spontaneous, right Andrea

---

war
past tense
subject omitted

ne
truncated version of eine

richtige
adjective, feminine inflection

adhoc
Sache
decision
Sache is also 'thing' or 'stuff'

irgendwie
post-posed

wa
speaker asks hearer to agree
using a highly dialectal
equivalent of the English
tag-question

ja
agreement

---

10 As a participant, admittedly a silent one, E is the only non-German speaker. A translation of the conversation would have been for his benefit.
spontaan

spontaneous

problem is here to show the teasing nature of the German original, perhaps this could be helped by intonation

nich

colloquial speech
stand standard nicht, another
German equivalent of an English tag-question

right

also: 'don't you agree'

The 'incompleteness' of the sentence, i.e., the omitted subject, the truncated ne, the wa-tag gives evidence of informal speech. I use the terms 'ellipsis', 'truncated', 'incomplete', etc., with reservation. They imply that utterances can be complete or incomplete. Each utterance is as complete as the conversation requires. Stefan's utterance in (5) could be considered syntactically incomplete. However, Stefan has a certain discourse purpose in mind which requires the 'incompleteness'. Hence, the utterance is complete within the discourse context. Martha replies with a potentially incomplete utterance, which lacks a surface subject. Nevertheless, her reply suffices in the colloquial context, thus not considered incomplete. Had Martha answered: Das stimmt, die Entscheidung war sehr spontan, würdest du dem nicht zustimmen, Andrea, Martha would surely have had to listen to comments like Was redest du denn für 'n Stuss?, etc.

The irony of (5) can be recognized in its English version, too. As we have seen, it is based on the adhoc -
spontaneous relationship, on the lengthening of spontaan, and most of all on the prior knowledge about Andrea's personal characteristics. Having the requisite background knowledge at her disposal, a TL-participant can appreciate the irony.

The ironic flavor can also be preserved in the following example.

(6)
S: ja, anstossen könn wa ooch noch ma
ok, let's drink to their health again

A: am liebsten mit andern Gläsern wa Stefan
preferably with other people's glasses, right?

S: war des deins
oh this was yours?

keine ansteckenden Krankheiten
no communicable diseases

gloob ick jedenfalls
at least I hope so

ja
ok

anstossen
let's drink to their health

no direct English equivalent
or let's toast them

könn

wa (wir)
(us)

ooch
(also)
dialectal: auch

noch
again

ma

am liebsten
preferably

mit
with

andern
other people's

Gläsern
glasses
wa  right
war  was
des  
deins  yours

keine  no
no subject and verb
implied 'ich habe keine ...'
ansteckenden  communicable
Krankheiten  diseases
at least
I
gloob  hope, believe

ich

standard: ich

jedenfalls  so

This non-literal translation captures the main ideas. But even so, a translator finds it necessary to single out certain words in the TL. Anstossen, for example, usually just means 'push', 'clink' or 'knock'. However, the context here does not require that they should bump into each other. It rather tells the participants what Stefan proposes.

The irony of (6) can also be translated successfully, particularly Andrea's utterance reprimanding Stefan for his mistake with the glass. Stefan's repartee, on the other hand, does not have to be thought of as ironic by a reader
of the translation unless she knows about Andrea's hypochondriac tendency. In the 80s, however, the time of AIDS, such an utterance would be considered quite tasteless without the contextual information.

(6)

auf
's
Klo
hinstellen

-----------------------------

das
muß
sich
automatisch
einschalten

Mensch

-----------------------------

die Leute
dürfen

11 ==== indicates utterance boundary
das
natürlich of course
nichts
davon notice
wissen it

oh------------------I tell you
da
komm
Sachen a lot 's stuff
raus 's gonna come out in there

Obviously, the word order differs, as is shown by the simple juxtaposition of the German and English equivalents above. In English we could have used a cleft construction like 'In the bathroom, that is where it should be put' for the German aufs Klo hinstellen. The speaker implies a person, a jemand like in jemand soll es auf's Klo hinstellen. Furthermore, the future-time interpretation of da komm Sachen raus has to be on the surface in English, as 'a lot 'a stuff 's gonna come out'.

The speaker achieves the colloquial flavor by ellipsis as well as by his choice of words. He chooses Klo instead of the more proper Bad or Toilette. Klo, a synecdoche, does not only signify the bathroom as a whole but also the commode itself.
Mensch, translated in other contexts with 'human being', is used here as an exclamation, somewhat like an intensifier, remotely comparable to 'you guys' or 'you all'. Often used interchangeably with Mann in utterances like Mensch, das mußt du doch wissen ('you really should have known this') or Mensch, war der doof ('really that guy was stupid'), it can also be paraphrased with weise or wirklich.

Die Leute, 'the people', could conceivably also be 'nobody' or 'everybody'. Furthermore, the speaker interrupts himself at this time and does not finish his sentence as expected. A translator has to account for unfinished sentences, interruptions, etc., somehow. Repairs, false starts, etc., are all signs of conversation and consequently have to appear in the TL-version to preserve the flavor of the utterance.

The unintended irony of (6) depends on the ambiguity of rauskommen ('come out, get out, find out') -- duplicatable in English. The speaker intends 'find out' but his audience 'misunderstands' 'come out'. After a bathroom visit it can jokingly be said 'Did everything come out ok?' No prior knowledge of the character is necessary.

(7)
Fäkalästhetiker, wo is der Wodka
faecal aestheticist, where is the vodka

Also the intended irony of (7), namely the juxtaposition of an outrageous nonce-lexeme with with a
simple request for a drink, can be kept in the translation. The translation of Fäkalästhetiker requires a nonce-form in the TL, i.e., leaves the translator to exercise her lexical creativity.12

(8)  
Ach Alte, mach doch nich so'n Uffstand  
eh, you're just an old nag, don't make such a fuss  

(8) poses another complication. Alte, a term for the wife or girlfriend, 'my old lady', however, with a negative undertone of nagging, does not have any equivalents in English. Stefan reprimands Helga. Uffstand or rather Aufstand appears in a fixed form here, Aufstand machen. Its literal interpretation 'to plan and be part in an uprising' gives way to a metaphorical one, 'making a fuss'. A good translation should preserve the intended connotations. Unfortunately, the TL text expresses a more insulting tone than the original. Consequently, the utterance gives a less ironic impression, because it is stated in a more drastic and less subtle way. The flavor of the irony cannot be transferred analogously.

Like its original, the translation of

(9)  
machen wa allet janz förmlich hier  
we're gonna be really formal here

12 How can a nonce-form be translated into a language in which the SL-nonce-form is, e.g., an idiom, without losing the nonce-form character and newness, and with it the intention of the speaker?
shows an opposition between an informal, vernacular, and a very formal style. Using Berlinerisch, Stefan does not necessarily present himself as a member of a specific socio-economic class, but rather as an inhabitant of a specific geographical area. The translation of the attitude connected to a particular dialect of a language poses the main problem for SL-dialect to TL-dialect translation. Of course, Stefan uses Berlinerisch for its particular connotations. Among others, a native of Berlin is supposed to be fast-witted and smart, etc. Dialects in the US are to this extent not associated with geographical areas. Everybody wants to talk as if they are from Iowa, but nobody wants to live there, or wants to take any further pride in it. A dialect-translation seems to be one of the major problems, depending on the degree of delicacy required in the translation.

Nevertheless, the irony of utterance (9) can still be understood even in a translation, when we juxtapose a very colloquial version, usually identified by contractions, to a rather formal one.

(10)
Wo ick so jeizich bin, da mach-ick Konsumverzicht
I am too stingy, I am going to renounce consumerism

provides yet another emergent problem a translator has to address. Konsumverzicht, a big word with a whole range of particularly leftist political connotations, has no equivalent in English, even if explained more elaborately.
'I am fed up with the material aspects' transmits the basic idea of Konsumverzicht but does not give all its flavor.

(11) Da hat er da mit so düssligen Fremdwörtern argumentiert yesterday he argued with such silly foreign words ja nich jescheckt I didn't get it

The irony which appears through the juxtaposition of Fremdwörter with argumentieren and jescheckt cannot be represented accurately in English. 'Foreign words' seems to be an inadequate translation of Fremdwörter, mainly because foreign words do not play as prominent a role in English as they do in German. Fremdwörter can be considered an institution in German. Language purists have long worried about the influence of other languages on German, particularly on the lexicon. Many loanwords have undergone Germanization, some with success, others failing miserably.\textsuperscript{13}

'Argued' has been incorporated into the English language and would no longer be considered a 'foreign word' at least to the same extent as argumentieren in German, still considered a Fremdwort. Recent loans from AE raise another question. Jescheckt, a relatively recent loan (after 1945) 'aus dem Anglo-Amerikanischen übernommen (bedeutet) -

\textsuperscript{13} The Latinate version Fenster, e.g., beat out the German version Guckloch ('window').
prüfen, ergründen' (Kupper 1987). Engaged\textsuperscript{14} has not yet made its way into a dictionary, hence, probably even more recent.

The irony of (11) cannot be reconstructed in English, no possible translation will show the same TL-connotations as jescheckt. The context of the use and prestige of foreign languages in the US (e.g., Spanish, German or French) is not comparable to the prestige and the use of AE in Germany. Historical circumstances (the continued presence of American and British soldiers in West-Germany and Berlin) as well as American cultural leadership and the technological progress it signifies, prove responsible for AE prestige. The Germans have coined a word for the extended usage of AE -- Amerikanismus.

The survey illustrated that in cases of mutually shared presuppositions and ideas, the instances of irony pose only minor translation problems. But translation proves difficult when irony is at play combined with different cultural preconceptions. The above discussion points to a further obstacle: In-group-knowledge-based ironies or statements will not only be difficult to translate from one language to another but also to paraphras in German using non-ironic language.

\textsuperscript{14} Cf. Appendix B, line 77.
4.3.3 Text C

The lower incidence of irony in Text C makes it initially easier to translate than texts A and B, except for some culturally specific terms. The appearance of irony, however, complicates the translation. The dialectal (Bavarian) phrases of disagreement or surprise -- ah geh, jetzt gehts aber jetzt gehts aber jetzt or na is doch recht -- have to be translated into corresponding 'empty' phrases in American English. Blümchenkaffee, literally 'flower coffee', does not convey its German meaning of coffee so weak that the coffee-drinker can see the flower at the bottom of her cup.

The phrases or exclamations constitute a build-up, which culminates in Ruth's ironic remark:

(13)
Vor allen Dingen darfst in österreich nie in ein
First of all you should never go to a coffee-house
Kaffeehaus gehen und sagen
and ask
du willst'nen Kaffee
for a coffee

The different types of coffee available in a Kaffeehaus are culturally determined. Their attempted translation encounters major obstacles

Kurzen - espresso
Schwarzen - no milk, black coffee
Milchkaffee - type of cafe au lait
Melange - type of cafe au lait
[kaf ] - ?
Mocca Faux/Muckefuck - ?
The presentation of the coffee (in a glass, cup, mug; with or without cream, milk, liqueur, etc.) differentiates each member of the above list. The speaker obviously considers [kaf ] substandard.\(^{15}\) The main differentiation we find in the US is caffeinated or non-caffeinated. Muckefuck, because of its taboo association would not make it in the US -- and it is not only the pronunciation that prompted it to disappear from the blackboard. While trying to keep the mocking tone, a translator, nevertheless, has to resort to a lengthy explanation of different customs. The paraphrase destroys the original format of the expression.

Text C, like Texts A and B, supports the notion that translation increases in difficulty, with the increasing culture specificity of the conversation.

4.3.4 Text D

Apart from a few verbal stereotypes (im Raum stehen lassen, die Zeit läuft davon, wir haben den Salat, etc.), nonce-forms (Pensionierungsaktionen, etc.), and this specifically German problem of a flexible retirement age (Rentenberg, Gastarbeiter, etc.), the translation of the text seems to present no particular difficulties. Even the irony at the end is easily transferred into an American context.

\(^{15}\) Herbert, Franz und Willy drink [kaf ].
(14)
Sie sind sicherlich noch nicht am Ende
I am sure you are not finished yet
ich kann mir ungefähr denken
I have some idea
was Sie noch sagen wollen
what you still want to say
aber wir wollen mal eben Baden-Baden das Wort geben
but we want to see what Baden-Baden has to say.

alluding to the culturally comparable role of a moderator.

4.4 Discussion

In translation of language constituents of all size-levels, the above analysis exposes potential problems: 1. the single lexical item that does not have an equivalent in the TL; 2. the phrase that is idiomatic and, hence, confronts the translator with the search for an idiomatic expression in English; 3. the implications and connotations of the single word as well as of a phrase, including the different world view and approach to living that is hidden behind them (e.g., AE loans into German); 4. the problems associated with colloquial and dialectal speech; and, finally, 5. the problems with time or currency of terms. Words that are fashionable during a certain time, if used ironically, can be misunderstood by a later reader as non-ironic, because she might be ignorant of the earlier ironic content. The usefulness and success of translation per se has been doubted.\(^{16}\) Nevertheless, approximate translation

often seems feasible, because translation is not a matter of all or none, but rather of degree. Translation is sometimes desirable not because of its accuracy in rendering the delicacy of the discourse content, but because it is an only resource.

Most problems arise when we try to translate irony. The irony often so obvious in the SL - might simply get lost in the TL, where it has to be replaced by a corresponding irony (if possible). The virtual 'untranslatability' of many ironies shows the strong link of irony to shared experience and cultural contexts.

Use of the cultural context enables successful transfer. Translation, paraphrase, and representation are all processes of transfer. Every representation of a text constitutes an alteration or variation of it. The process of representation, as has been claimed by some (notably Steiner 1975), is basically the same as that of translation. Translation and paraphrase share the transition from some type of text to another type of text, e.g., a different genre, style, or language. For instance, if a spectator wishes to represent or retell the episode of Text A, she has several options at her disposal.

- re-perform, in order to stay as close to the original as possible
- relate the general idea, perhaps with one or two examples to illustrate
- re-present by the use of the joke format, etc.
All of the options are possible paraphrases of the original. Retelling does not require that the cultural context be explained. The context is, to a certain degree, evoked as present by virtue of the use of the same language. Translation, on the other hand, requires the elaboration of the specific cultural context as part of its process.

Moreover, each culture defines itself in different ways. Language is one of the ways a culture is expressed. Other modes are music, art, architecture, design, and fashion, etc. This plurality of cultural modes of expression supports the claim of untranslatability of content from one language to another (without, however, contradicting the notion that translation is possible to a degree).

We have illustrated in Chapter Two, Figure 19, that irony shifts the interpretation of an expression while not severing its tie with its conventionally recognized content. Conceptual structures of two or more languages do not necessarily overlap. For this reason an irony, when translated, acquires additional interpretation possibilities in the TL that are different from those of the SL.

4.5 Conclusion

In summary, the concept of irony has been shown to be a result of its cultural embeddedness and in-group-sharedness. As in Text A, irony can be the overlying factor for a complete text -- where the non-ironic has then to be
specifically marked. Specific subtexts, small or large, within a larger text can be marked as ironic by various means (cf. Text B), i.e., the ironic mode can be turned on or off for a whole subtext. Irony is not limited to one word, phrase, utterance, or even larger chunk of language material. Characterizing its user and her relationship with the victim and the audience, irony can only be viewed within the context of its instantiation. Thus, the ironic mode of a SL- text has to be transferred in order not to grossly falsify the content.
CHAPTER FIVE. IRONY AND RELATED PHENOMENA

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the ironic mode is compared to other discourse concepts (figures or genres) that evoke similar questions. All of those described here, namely, metaphor, pun, parody, satire, jokes, and lies, share with irony an interactive double-layeredness in their expression. However, the manner of application of the duality, that is the relation between the first (surface) and second or further (extended) reading differs with each genre or trope.¹

5.2 Discussion

5.2.1 Metaphor

Metaphor presents itself at the heart of language. 'Like word play, metaphor incites us to think, see and hear on more than one level concurrently' (Redfern 1980:97). This multi-layeredness relates closely and can be compared to irony. Metaphorical use of language thus plays an important role in the treatment of irony.

Aristotle considered metaphors to be 'the transference of a name to another thing' (Tyler 1978:316). Tyler

¹ The notion of double-layeredness or duality is potentially misleading. It should not tempt us to assume, that the surface reading corresponds to an underlying reading on a one to one basis.
considers this definition too narrow and also includes comparison and symbolic transformation. Metaphors can be described as summaries that open up an otherwise tediously and lengthily described view in a particular context (cf. Tyler 1978). Encountering new and unfamiliar metaphors, the hearer has a way to analyze them, namely by comparing the concepts she thinks hidden in the metaphor to the situation at hand and deducing the relationship by recognition of a sharedness of the features.

A metaphor 'picks out and emphasizes or exaggerates some aspect of meaning' (Tyler 1978:325). We see that 'the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another' (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:5). Therefore, the hearer can even decode nonce metaphors, i.e., a metaphor used for the first time, provided she shares the requisite experiences, situations, or cultural context with the speaker.

The formation of metaphors happens uniquely in each cultural context. Metaphors are formed in terms of one's experience. 'The most fundamental values in a culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in the culture' (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:22). Lakoff and Johnson discuss the formation of metaphors in American culture: more is better, bigger is better, the up - down orientation, etc. We can probably apply these basic distinction to Western Culture in general.
Braun (1987) studied German metaphor-bases. These agree with Lakoff and Johnson's basic distinctions but are formed on the basis of different experiences. Sports, particularly soccer, provides a large amount of metaphors, and also traffic, particularly trains (cf. Braun 1987 p. 44 ff.).

Everyday language depends on metaphors to a great extent, and for that reason, the description of metaphors requires mention of the actual context of use. Metaphors, moreover, represent the main locus of semantic change either by the loss of the 'literal' meaning or the acquisition of a further context-dependent meaning.

Written material can only inadequately represent the spoken word, the action. The inclusion of every relevant detail of the context in a representation of a speech situation -- be it in writing or talking -- is in fact impossible. By selecting a portion to be treated as salient, we can give an account of a small part of the relevant detail, and thereby invoke an interpretation.

While both the figures of metaphor and irony share the feature of duality, the application of this double-layeredness in the discourse differs with each type. The duality of metaphors complements the meaning. The basis of the duality is a relation of similarity, as well as some analogical relationship between the metaphor and what it denotes. This iconic relationship can be obscured with the passage of time. To wit, not everybody knows 'the real
McCoy', the person or incident behind this (dead) metaphor. This, however, does not stop anybody from using this expression in an appropriate context.

An irony is always nonce. Once conventionalized, an irony loses its ironic content. A metaphor, on the other hand, is only nonce, when it is first coined. A nonce metaphor is frequently, but not necessarily, signalled in English expressions, like 'so-called', 'I would say', etc. It sometimes needs some explanation. With frequent use, the metaphor can become fixed, and its origin is then obscured. We like to think about metaphor on a scale from nonce metaphor to dead metaphor, in which the deciding factors are frequency of past idiomatic usage and knowledge about the origin of the metaphor.

As I have already suggested, the relationship between metaphor and irony is not just one of partial similarity, but also one of inclusion. Irony, rather a mode than a figure of speech or trope (the traditional view), can make use of metaphors for its purposes, for example, by an overuse of metaphors, by the juxtaposition of incongruent metaphors, by the use of contextually 'unfitting' metaphors, and even by the use of metaphors per se as in the following example (from a conversation in a German department at an American University):
(1)
Ich hatte mal eine Freundin, die hatte ein Kind.
Mann, ich sag dir, die war ein richtiges Biest.
Die war auch Wassermann, so wie du.

With Biest (beast) the speaker denotes such negative qualities as meanness, nastiness, etc., in the woman. The speaker extends the relation to one of the hearers in the audience. The bitchy woman and the 'victim' share the Aquarius astrological sign and, hence, might also both have beastly personalities as the speaker attempts to suggest. His statement was followed by a burst of laughter.

Thus, we have discovered a functional difference. In order to 'understand metaphor it is necessary to understand the elements to be linked, ... to understand irony it is necessary to understand the situation in which the ironic remark is made' (Winner 1988:10). Metaphors clarify, illuminate, or explain, i.e., they constitute a description, whereas irony constitutes a comment, i.e., an evaluation, to convey an attitude toward a situation (cf. also Winner 1988).

5.2.2 Puns

Metaphors are used for ironic purposes. But metaphors also appear in punning. In puns, as in metaphor and irony, there appears the conceptual two-(multi)-layeredness invoked above. Two schemes of reference converge to let the audience hear or see double (cf. Redfern 1980). A comparison of puns
and instances of irony show their similarity and also their interaction. For example, an intended pun can pursue ironic purposes. Unintended puns can—by definition—only be unintentionally ironic. The speaker did not intend to influence the interpretation of the situation.

The reconstruction of puns reveals the second meaning. In contrast to irony, however, an incongruence factor does not need to play a role because the surface meaning often rather supports the second meaning. Puns are a 'form of speech play in which a word or phrase unexpectedly and simultaneously combines two unrelated meanings' (Sherzer 1985:213). We consider puns to be spontaneous, on-the-spot, and predominantly oral. Compilations of originally orally produced puns take them out of context and destroy their effectiveness. Puns are based on the phonological identity or similarity of the form actually used to the form whose meaning is additionally intended. Not just the presence of multiple meanings creates puns (otherwise every homonym would be a pun), but the (contextual) plausibility of both meanings in their dual relevance. The pun signals two separate meanings simultaneously. The context gives the decoder clues as to the pun's interpretation.

A pun occurs when we make a joke by confusing two apparently different meanings of the same phonemic pattern. The pun seems funny or shocking because it challenges a taboo which ordinarily forbids us to recognise that the sound pattern is ambiguous. In many cases, such verbal taboos have social as well as linguistic aspects (Leach in Redfern 1980:91).
Superimposing the meanings 'like a bus or a sandwich, the pun is a double-decker' (Redfern 1980:26). Like puns irony is also

double-edged, two-in-one, a bargain ...
the punner can take refuge like the ironist,
behind the pretense that he did not intend the
other meaning of the double entendre, just as
the ironist can protest that he was speaking
literally (Redfern 1980:96).

Like jokes, we consider puns to be common property. Produced mainly for humorous or witty purposes, some puns, particularly the obscene ones, attack 'the sacredness of taboo words' (Farb 1973:99). Redfern describes a pun as 'a verbal practical joke ... it has to pass off similarity as identity' (1980:15). Each pun can have several different types of interpretation. The hearer may choose his preferred way of interpretation, or she may simply leave the room, in case of an obscene pun. Some puns, though, force one particular type of reading. In the following example verduften in relation to Männer can only be understood as the slang term for 'to leave' or the pun will not be understood as a pun. Verduften is otherwise predominantly used with the meaning of 'to piss off'.

(2)
Männer sind wie Parfüm: jederzeit bereit zu verduften.
('Man are like perfume: always willing to evaporate/leave'.)
(2) exemplifies an untranslatable pun or play on words. The metaphorical use of verduften provides several interpretation-possibilities. First, as a slang term for 'to leave' (used, e.g., to tell someone unwanted to 'piss off', verdufte!). Second, to evaporate. Moreover, perfume has a basic quality, namely, Parfüm duftet, i.e., perfume 'smells nicely'. Several potentially conflicting but simultaneously invoked interpretation possibilities of the verb constitute the pun.

5.2.3 Parody

Unlike punning, parody involves a larger organization. It has been called a genre. 'Like punning or irony, parody superimposes two levels or schemes of reference, so that we hear or see double' (Redfern 1980:93). Again we deal with a double-layeredness, here: an incongruous imitation. 'Parody traditionally stands as a grotesque double of lofty genres and famous works; as they reach the peak, it consecrates and undermines them at the same time' (Abastado in Redfern 93). Hutcheon challenges the traditional interpretation as 'ridiculing imitation' (Hutcheon 1985:5). She wants to expand the range of the concept of parody 'from the ironic and playful to the scornful and ridiculing' (ibid. 6).

Parody, conventionally defined as a counter-song, 'an opposition or contrast between texts' (ibid. 32), does not necessarily need to denote contrast -- just like irony.
Etymologically, 'para' signifies "against" as well as "beside". This second meaning potentially broadens parody's scope to a 'repetition with difference' (ibid.).

More than quotation or allusion, parody has a bi-textual determination. 'Allusion is "a device for the simultaneous activation of two texts"' (Ben-Porat 1976 in Hutcheon 1985:107), but it does so mainly through correspondence -- not difference -- as is the case with parody (Hutcheon 1985:43).

We have to delimit parody and related forms (e.g., pastiche, burlesque) from plagiarism. Both are acknowledged borrowings with which the author intends the audience to draw a connection to the original work. Like irony or puns, parody builds on something already existent, it repeats and this 'repetition ... includes difference' (Hutcheon 1985:37). Parody imitates another work of verbal art and distorts certain of its parts. 'Eine Parodie ... kann die Diskrepanz von 'hoch' und 'niedrig' auf der Formebene wie auf der Inhaltsebene ausnützen, um ihren Gegenstand ... durch kritische Nachahmung anzugreifen' (Jauss 1976:104). Irony does the same but on a different level. We differentiated between inherently ironic texts (Text A) and texts where the irony appears intermittently, i.e., on a smaller scale (Texts B - D). The density of ironic content varies.
As soon as an art form goes out of vogue or becomes overused, parodies of it will tend to appear. Parody, hence, facilitates change, and is one of the indications of change. Parody aims to criticize as well as to ridicule, ultimately for satiric ends. The parodied work itself does not necessarily constitute the aim of the criticism, but rather becomes its means.

5.2.4 Satire

Both parody and satire (also a genre) rely on irony as a central feature. Satire, a type of parody, directs its goals more towards criticism. Its scope differs from that of parody. Instead of focusing on a genre, it wants 'to hold up to ridicule the vices and follies of mankind with an eye to their correction' (Hutcheon 1985:43). In a satire we expect a high degree of irony content permeating the whole text to the extent that in a satiric text, a non-ironic statement requires to be marked as such.

Satire picks out and distorts, like a caricature, 'an objectionable quality, attributing it to an individual or a group, then describing the victim only in terms of that disagreeable characteristic' (Feinberg in Petro 1982:15/16). Satire describes, ridicules, and criticizes by means of...
bestimmt, sie kann sich mit allen literarischen Formen verbinden' (Kiener 1983:92).

In the following, I will focus on satire and its relationship to irony by examining a satire written by Wolfgang Ebert, a satirist writing for the German newspaper Die Zeit. According to Ebert, as soon as he reads the morning paper, he is already angry. As a satirist he has an outlet for his frustrations, namely his satires, in the hope of contributing to change. But he also realizes that 'satire often preaches to the converted' (Enright 1986:78).

In his "Gegendarstellung", he attacks the missing Vergangenheitsbewältigung ('coming to terms with the past') of the 68-veterans, who are now comfortably established in the confines of a state they tried to fight in the 60's. On reading this satire, we expect irony on every line, and we are not disappointed.

Ebert, of course, has underlying intentions and does not really want to help the ex-radicals good-naturedly to redefine their actions. In order to meet his satirical ends, Ebert takes a well established form — a multiple-choice question format. He provides a check-list (Allzweckformular)

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2 Lecture in the Goethe-Institut Houston, and personal conversation in October 1988.

3 Cf. Appendix E.

4 Cf. also 3.3.
for the ex-radicals to use in justifying to themselves their former subversive activities.

Yet Ebert does not only make fun of the ex-radicals, he also calls into question the multiple-choice interview format by using it for a decidedly inappropriate purpose. The claim to value of multiple-choice questionnaires has always been that this format is best suited for testing objective knowledge. Ebert uses it here as a check-list for very personal, potentially damaging personal information. The satire, hence, evolves on several different levels, criticizing

a) the form itself - the multiple-choice format

b) the victims - A - the 68 veterans

B - the politicians (by using their political jargon)

In the language used we find similar signals for irony that we have identified in Chapter Two:

1. juxtaposition of incongruent words
cf. Paragraph 3: 'Nähzeug (Schreibmaschinen, Nagelfeilen) für Laos'. Particularly Nagelfeilen seems insignificant for a country engaged in a secret war. A shipment of Nagelfeilen surely did not rank very highly on the list of what is needed.

2. usage of the then (and often still) fashionable terminology of the new left: 'WG (konspirativen, hausbesetzten Wohnung)'.
3. usage of the language of the politicians, who are never prepared to answer and - if they do so - always think that their answers have been taken out of context ('heimtückisch aus dem Zusammenhang gerissen').

Many of Ebert's distractors in the multiple choice items appear outrageous and funny. In paragraph six, for example, the renunciation of the past becomes particularly clear in the justification option for having received a subscription to a subversive newspaper. Especially the last choice seems absurd: Ich habe (die Zeitung)... nur immer als Einwickelpapier verwendet, because no one would, of course, subscribe to a paper in order to use it solely as wrapping-paper.

The very last paragraph of Ebert's satire shows a recent fad of this generation, namely, the religious devotion to and immersion in Indian philosophy, complete even with a new personal name.

We have said that a satire takes aim at a human issue. Ebert does not disappoint us. Criticizing the ex-radicals' failure in their attempts to come to terms with the past (Vergangenheitsbewältigung), he simultaneously shows the change from a politically active, idealizing generation to a mentally jaded, inactive, not-wanting-to-take-issue-any-more generation, who have exchanged their ideals for material comfort. Interestingly, we find the victims of this satire actually among the readers of Die Zeit.
5.2.5 Jokes

Up until now all of the genres discussed have shown evidence of duality, but have realized the multilayeredness in different ways. In the remaining sections, I want to examine jokes and lies. Both lie at the periphery. We can recognize elements of conceptual duality, particularly in the lie, where a true-false opposition exists. A joke's double-layeredness appears in terms of the conflicts it invokes. The joke shows

wie die Logik mit der Grammatik in Konflikt kommt, die Grammatik mit der Semantik, die Logik mit der Wirklichkeit - und was es sonst noch an Widerspruchs-Kombinationen, nicht nur zweifacher, sondern auch mehrfacher Art, gibt (Höllerer 1977:317).

Jokes typically incorporate all of the above discussed concepts in some way. After all, we find metaphors and puns in jokes. And jokes also find use in parodies of other forms as well as in satire.

Irony and jokes, then, can be examined in similar ways, as they share a number of features. Basically, we can pose similar questions for each:

- why is something funny/ironic?
- what is the substance of the joke/irony?
- what are the means and aims of the joke/irony?
- who laughs/smiles about whom, when, and why?
- where do we find the tensions and conflicts (here also incongruencies) that constitute a joke/irony?

- what situations prohibit joking or the use of irony?

But jokes and instances of irony can not generally be equated. Jokes violate basic principles of irony, namely the deceptive, the secretive. A joke wants to be immediately recognized, an irony, on the other hand, wants to deceive and does not necessarily require everybody to recognize it.

Jokes are usually classified according to many different point of views: persons (Bubba, Klein-Erna), subject areas (children), content (political, sexual), by the technique (wordjoke, Cartoon), type (dry humor, black humor), ethnic (Jewish), location (school, insane asylum) (cf. Röhrich 1977), geographical (Ostfriesen), professional (nurses, doctors), etc. In the following I am going to focus on political jokes and explore their relationship to irony.

Joke (3) appeared in a collection of question - answer jokes presumably of Sowiet origin. A covert criticism of the existing oppressive government tactics renders these jokes very political. The basic joke structure is

1 - question to Radio Eriwan

2 - Radio Eriwan answers

'Im Prinzip ja .......'
This JA already shows the duality and underlying opposition of this type of jokes. In this joke the audience learns that jokes and humor constitute a good outlet for frustration and criticism in an oppressive political system. With the underlying message -- the situation is so bad, the only thing left to do is to laugh -- the speaker asks for solidarity from those hearers that understand the implications.

(3)
Frage an Radio Eriwan:
Gibt es bei uns mehr Humor als anderswo?
Radio Eriwan antwortet:
Im Prinzip ja, aber wir haben ihn auch nötig.
(Parth and Schiff:7)\(^5\)

The next example comes from a collection of Jewish jokes by Salcia Landmann (1961:206).

(4)
[sichrono/a ... le 'olam: Möge sein/ihr Andenken ewig wahren! Feste Formel, wenn man von geachteten Verstorbenen spricht.]
Ein Brief aus Nazideutschland, der die Zensur anstandslos passierte: 'Lieber Vetter

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\(^5\) As mentioned before, jokes are everybody's property, and do not fall under a copyright law. I will, however, indicate the source of a joke, wherever I am aware of it.
Schloime, es geht uns glänzend. Alles, was die amerikanischen Zeitungen über die Mißhandlungen von Juden schreiben, ist reine Greuelpropaganda. Wir möchten nirgends anderswo leben - außer vielleicht bei Tante Sara - sichrona le 'olam!'

The stock phrase 'sichrono/a ... le 'olam', of course, places the previous statement into jeopardy. And yet, only the initiated can understand the underlying message, namely, that the writer would rather be dead than in Nazi-Germany. Significantly, the genre of joke that shows a propensity for irony are political jokes.

The following joke, dated Spring 1933, also uses the term Greuel, used extensively in the Third Reich as a prefix.6

(5)
Isaak trifft Cohn, dessen Kopf dick verbunden ist. Außerdem trägt er einen Arm in der Binde und hinkt. 'Nu, was ist, Cohn', ruft Isaak entsetzt, 'was hat man mit dir gemacht?!' - 'Pst', flüstert Cohn aus seinem Verband heraus, 'sei still! Ich bin ein Greuel-märchen!' (Hirche 1964:35)

Jokes (4) and (5) are not really knee-slappers. The hearer appreciates them for the cleverness they use to express criticism and sentiment toward the ruling class. Cohn's self-description as a Märchen, moreover, a Greuelmärchen, using the terminology of his oppressors, i.e., as something mystical, non-existent or if existent

6 For an extensive discussion and assessment of Nazi-language, see Victor Klemperer. 1966. Die unbewältigte Sprache.
then only in the mind, juxtaposed with his actual condition, gives the hearer/reader the flavor of this time. Because of its obvious criticism, this joke is more dangerous to retell than (4), and even the uninitiated can understand it. (5) belongs to a genre of jokes in an oppressed society called Flüsterwitze ('whispered jokes'), i.e., jokes only told to insiders. 'In jenen Jahren (Nazi-Zeit) hat sich der politische Angriffswitz als Ausdruck einer latenten Widerstands bewegung erwiesen' (Hirche 1964:51).

Hirche recognizes three functions of political jokes. A political function, namely, the attack or defense of an existing system. Second, a sociological function, the solidarity among the attacker or defenders, and, finally, a psychological function, namely, the reduction of frustration about the existing system by voicing dissent. Accordingly, the political joke is often a good indicator of the sentiment of a people.

We would imagine a more extensive use of irony in a more oppressed political system, which does not tolerate jokes and any type of criticism associated with them. Instances of irony are hard to prove, even though often easily detected. The ironist hides the real meaning of his statement, wants to express something covertly, masked in platitudes and inoffensive statements. We might expect that the more oppressed a people becomes, the more irony will be used for the expression of general sentiments. For example,
a poor Haitian standing in torn clothes in front of his
shaggy hut might have uttered: 'Papa Doc is our savior, he
provided everything', while meaning just the opposite and
achieving this meaning through the juxtaposition of his
utterance and the context, i.e., his appearance.

People need an outlet for frustrations (psychological
function) and their feelings. As we have seen, this can
often be expressed ironically, but not allowed overtly. 'Wer
an Macht gewinnt, (verliert oft) an Humor' (Hirche 1964:46).
In this respect a speech community employs irony because of
its detectability by insiders only. Irony becomes a suitable
means for voicing dissent without giving oneself away.
Hirche says in this respect,

> der politische Humor bedarf ... eines
geistigen und gesellschaftlichen
Freiheitsraumes. Wo dieser fehlt, wo die
politische Freiheit beseitigt und die soziale
"Wohlfahrt" mißachtet wird, verkümmert auch
der Humor, an seine Stelle treten Ironie,
Karikatur, Satire und Witz. (ibid. 16)

Only a community of like-minded members understands an
instance of irony which can not be understood by officials
not sharing the necessary cues. Irony produced in an
official setting can be used as a means for strengthening a
shared sentiment, an irony that divides, and, as a secret
code, unifies the insiders. Solidarity is hence, a goal of
irony.
Here I have discussed irony utilized as a feature of jokes. The irony can be decoded, provided that the hearer or reader has knowledge about the time and setting of the joke.

Irony's contextual dependence is a reason why irony might not be understood if retold after the fact. Everyone has had the experience of trying to relate a funny or ironical situation and not being able to get the feeling across, shrugging it off with a 'you had to be there'. The more subtle the irony, the harder to retell it. Some instances of irony can become dependent on the time of their creation, i.e., dated and only enjoyable by persons who either participated in it or have knowledge about the time.

Thus we have to examine the additional context when dealing with irony in general and with the retelling of it. Jokes create their own immediate contexts. Their presentation follows a specific purpose: amusement, embarrassment, or others. Also the content of the joke relates to a domain of cultural knowledge. A joke will fail if such knowledge is not present. Asp contends 'that 'unfunniness' (is) ... due to lack of knowledge: this knowledge being specific to the differing communicating community contexts of encoding' (Asp MS:31), hence, socially shared. Consider in this respect the following joke.
(6)

This joke presupposes the (prejudicial) knowledge that Jews (a) do not like to take baths, and (b) are covetous. Marfurt plays around with this joke and substitutes "thieves" for Jews. With thief we no longer invoke association (a). The joke loses even more in substance if we substitute "idiots" for "Jews." As we do not expect idiots to be accountable for their actions, the joke totally loses its effectiveness. A good joke, therefore, should not be changed too drastically, since there exists an apparent danger of mutilating it and destroying its subtleties. The hearer's imagination is turned on, however, too easily turned off if the joke does not leave something to discover, i.e., if it spells out too much.

Marfurt (1977) establishes a basic structure of jokes which consists of three parts: the introduction, the body of the joke, and the conclusion. Each part has its specific function. The introduction establishes the setting and introduces the persons. The body dramatizes the introduction and starts the dialogue. The punchline signals the conclusion and with it the end of the joke. The most

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7 C.f. also Freud 1948.
successful joke is short and suggestive and has an abrupt, unexpected ending.

Hockett (1977), who considers jokes an art form, is concerned with jokes mainly for structural purposes. He also (like Marfurt) distinguishes three parts in a joke's make-up: the build-up, the pivot (of the build-up), i.e., vital information which is needed to understand the punchline, and, of course, the punch. Jokes thus have a certain structure that has to be followed.

Evidence for pivots is the fact that in retelling a joke, a great deal of the build-up can be recast in widely varying ways; but if the pivot is altered or omitted, even if the punch is delivered correctly, the joke is either no longer a joke or, if it is still funny, is a different joke (Hockett 1977:267).

We find one relatively stable feature in the joke: the punchline, and, to add Hockett, the pivot. The well-intentioned hearer, might construct the context. The content of the joke is usually non-factual, as expected.


(8) Zwei Juden treffen sich 1970 auf dem Ku-Damm... (ibid. 70)

Joke (8) has apparently crossed the borderline into non-jokes or nonsense. Here the introduction functions simultaneously as the punchline. The whole joke actually establishes only the immediate context. But, let's assume that joke (8) was told by a German Jew in the late 30s or early 40s and suddenly we can construct the function and context of the supposed joke. (8) becomes a prophecy and a triumph over the Nazi-Regime which did not manage to eradicate the Jews after all. Nevertheless, (8) would always evoke the cooperative hearer's reaction, *und???* We see that, even though a context can be created, (8) violates some basic criteria of joke telling and this instance shows us that there must exist certain criteria (this is negative evidence). (8) misses a punchline. Is the punchline therefore a necessary feature of the prototypical joke?

Joke (7) has a punchline, at least formally, but it misses, as Marfurt (1977:42) says, 'eine(n) thematischen Zusammenhang oder eine(n) hintergründigen Sinn'. I do not completely agree with this statement. Consider the following interpretation:

*Wie spät ist es?* is a common question - no obvious problem yet. The problem arises with the conductor's answer *Mittwoch*. Well, at first glance, this answer seems utter nonsense. But imagine that the conductor's shift nears its end. About 200 times he had to listen to that very same
question during the rush hour traffic, and now, fed up with it, he attempts a snide remark. The passenger notices the conductor's mood and pays him back with an even sillier repartee: Oh, dann muß ich schleunigst aussteigen.

The interchange in (7) no longer seems so impossible. In this instance, I have played the part of the hearer, very willing to cooperate in a joke-telling-situation by taking the time to discover the humor, and thus explained the seemingly unexplainable nonsense.

A willing hearer will experience no difficulties with joke (9). Even though it crosses the nonsense-barrier quite clearly, it can get spontaneous laughs. 'Ein Unsinnswit (erlaubt vielmehr) dem Erzähler, sich auf Kosten des Hörers zu belustigen' (Marfurt 1977:43).\(^8\)

Following Freud we assume three participants in a joke, namely, the speaker (author), the hearer, and the audience. 'Der Witz braucht im allgemeinen drei Personen, außer der, die den Witz macht, eine zweite, die zum Objekt der Aggression genommen wird, und eine dritte, an der sich die Absicht des Witzes, Lust zu erzeugen, erfüllt' (Röhrich 1977:37).

Jokes as a genre do not have a specific author. We read jokes in joke-collections, and asking about the authors seems futile. I think we can very well assume that the

\(^8\) Could we perhaps judge the effectiveness of a joke by the time elapsed until the laughter starts?
creator of a joke like (10) would rather identify with the
the Rabbi than the author.

(10)
Rabbi: Aus Eurem Buch habe ich etwas sehr
Wertvolles erfahren.
Autor: Das ist für mich ein großes
Kompliment, Rabbi!
Rabbi: Ja - ich wüsste nämlich bisher
garnicht, daß es in Kowno eine Druckerei
gibt.

The Rabbi appears definitely in a stronger position
than the author. This can in part be ascribed to his title
and status. The author, furthermore, shows him reverence.
What does the author expect of the Rabbi? Well, at least
some praise, as he seems to value the Rabbi's opinion
highly, as evident from his reaction. However, the Rabbi
does not think very highly of the book. The only information
he deems valuable is that the book must have been printed in
Kowno. The Rabbi, well-trained and tactful, does not want to
say anything bad about the book and, henceforth, says the
only positive thing he can think of. The above
interpretation presupposes a kind of scatter-brained Rabbi
who does not notice the second reading in what he says. But,
I would rather like to interpret him as being intentionally
ironic, conveying to the author by 'praise-for-the-trivial'
that he does not think the book very valuable. This tactic
keeps the Rabbi from having to disclose what he actually
thinks about the book and it, further, probably effectively
keeps the author from mentioning the subject again.
Critically and candidly uttering his objections does not fit into the picture the Rabbi has of himself.

Speakers perform jokes for the benefit of the audience/hearer, the third participant. The hearer determines the scale of success. When telling jokes, we expect a good-willed, cooperative hearer. Freud considers the third participant essential in the joke-mode. 'Die dritte Person, der das Komische mitgeteilt wird, verstärkt den komischen Vorgang, fügt aber nichts Neues hinzu' (Freud 1948:206). The comic situation as such only needs two participants, one person who finds the comical, and a second person on whom it is found.

A hearer who willfully destroys the efforts of the speaker by questioning each part of the joke is considered non-cooperative. The hearer has the option to retell the joke. Without hearers being able to do so, joke-collections would not exist. However, this often proves a difficult endeavor. Who has not started to tell a joke only to notice that the whole punchline or its particularly important wording is locked somewhere in the memory. It needs a little talent to be an effective re-teller.

Certain openers establish a joke-telling situation, for example

Kennst du den Witz, wo ...

Oh, ich kenne da einen tollen Witz ..., etc.
The speaker also wants to find out if the hearer already knows the joke. This can happen either by giving a short summary of the joke, preferably excluding the punchline or by a later repair. The joke-situation has already been established and the speaker then asks,

*Kennst du den nicht?*

*Den kennst du doch, oder?*

to avoid telling a joke the hearer already knows.

We have noticed that jokes have some peculiarities that mark them as jokes and by means of which they are recognized as such. An instance of irony cannot be analyzed in the same way. An introduction to point to a following irony defeats its purposes. Irony wants to be discovered and requires to be discovered. Marking an upcoming irony with

*Achtung, ich werde jetzt ironisch sein.*

might be ironic in itself, because the speaker violates the criteria for irony. On the other hand, it might very well just be plain stupidity. However, there are signals for irony, but they are not as obvious as the above statement and are not exclusively used for ironic purposes. 'Das allgemeine Signal der Ironie ist der Kontext' (Lansberg 1967:79, italics not included). Ironies are signalled, however, the individual signals are not exclusively used for irony.

This discussion about jokes has been presented at such length, because I have intended to demonstrate that the
comparison of jokes and instances of irony provides us with additional information about irony. To summarize: Irony plays a role particularly in political jokes by dividing the audience into insiders and outsiders. Jokes thus use irony. We expect instances of irony to appear predominantly in political or other 'critical' jokes. We classify jokes according to their subject matter, instances of irony according to their functions and decodability. The decoding of a joke as an instance of irony shows many similarities. Schweizer (1964) contends that in order to decode a joke, the hearer has to be able to notice similarities as well as differences and then compare them. This requirement also holds for irony. Furthermore, both the joke and an instance of irony need three participants. And yet the main difference between irony and jokes lies in their basic structure, their signals, and the way they want to be detected.

5.2.5 Lies

We have to delimit irony from lies. 'Sprachliche Lügen aber sind ... die meisten rhetorischen Figuren wie Euphemismen, Hyperbeln, Ellipsen ... Ironie, Tabuwörter, Anthropomorphismen' (Weinrich 1961:12). Following Augustine then, we define lying as an intention to say something wrong

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9 This is not to claim that a classification can be an indicator of any real difference.
against better knowledge, also delimiting lies from just mistakes.

A lie contains a truth - falsehood opposition. The liar wants to hide the truth. She will try to imitate all the features of truthful speech and avoid giving signals that may jeopardize her statement. A successful irony, if intended, on the other hand, wants to be found out. Hearers can decode the signals for irony, whereas with a good liar there should ideally be no linguistic or extralinguistic signals for lies. Everything we say and do is the truth until proven false. But we should not forget unintended ironies and for that matter also so-called unintended lies, which we rather like to term mistakes or errors.

Superficially spoken, irony and lie have the same definition: 'ein gesagter Satz verbirgt einen ungesagten Satz, der von diesem um das Assertionsmorphem (i.e., not) abweicht' (Weinrich 1961:59). Irony can be a type of lying, however, truth and falsehood do not form an opposition in irony. The most significant difference between irony and lie remains its signals. In a written text, the author has to mark a lie; the audience or the reader need to identify a liar.

The context of a situation and not just a single word represents the locus of lying. Words cannot lie because they never appear out of context. 'Isolierte Wörter sind fiktive Wörter. Nur Wörter im Text sind reale Wörter' (Weinrich
1961:48). However, a word that has been misused, i.e., words 'mit denen viel gelogen (wurde) ..., (können) selber verlogen werden' (ibid. 35). Some words then become mendacious only in connection with other words. The only difference between a true and a mendacious statement is an assertion morpheme - not. Hence, each sentence has a yes/no-quality, a truth-value.

A lie, by definition, is intended. The speaker follows a certain purpose, e.g., personal gain, diversion from a mistake, avoidance of embarrassment. The ironist also intends irony. The purpose of irony, however, differs. To name a few: form solidarity bonds, be witty, etc.

Lying is extensively used, and at times even depriected by society. The definition of a lie or the designation of a statement as a lie depends often on the social status of the liar and the situation of its instantiation. A relatively insignificant lie, like 'I did not eat the cookies', receives often a more severe punishment than 'I will not raise the taxes'.

In this respect a look at the use of the term lie in proverbs and idioms proves suggestive: Notlügen or 'white lies' are socially acceptable to a certain extent. The condemnation of lying and the liar becomes clear: Lügen haben kurze Beine; das Blaue vom Himmel herunterlügen; lügen, wie gedruckt; jemandem die Hucke vollügen; etc. These all support the negative image of lying. Furthermore,
fairy-tales (e.g., Zwerg Nase) or children's stories (e.g., Pinocchio) exemplify the general folk belief that lying brings with it physiological signs, namely, a long or a growing nose. In our more sophisticated era, sweat and heartbeat are considered the indices of lying, hence the use of lie-detectors.

Irony, on the other hand, not condemned in the same way, often becomes a part of conversations, and is accepted even if not understood. The ironist, if she shows wit and not just mean spirit, is often desirable as an interlocutor and also respected.

To recapitulate: In lie there is a truth - falsehood opposition which cannot be found in irony. The signals for the former are hidden, not to be discovered, whereas an ironist wants his irony to be discovered, with only one constraint - perhaps not by everybody. Lying, by definition, is intended, irony does not necessarily need to be intended.

5.3 Conclusion

Traditionally, we classify metaphors, puns, and irony among the figures or tropes; satire, parody, and, perhaps, jokes among the genres, and lies as a mode of discourse that is more difficult to classify. As we have seen, the concepts discussed above differ in form, function, and purpose, but at the same time share certain features with each other and with irony.
Duality emerges as a unifying factor, but is realized differently in each of the concepts. Furthermore, shared knowledge constitutes the basis of understanding the implications of the figures and genres. A foreigner who has not yet mastered the language of his host country will not understand the underlying intentions in 'So-and-so kicked the bucket', and, perhaps, take it literally, if she hears it out of context. However, in the context of 'and the funeral will be ...', she might construct a nonce meaning, even if she cannot denote it. A foreigner's misuse or misunderstanding of a metaphor or idiom is often a source of humor, and as such can be potentially exploited for jokes, etc.

The duality common to all of these concepts, as well as the precondition of shared knowledge for intended understanding, comprises the basic similarities. Essentially, the concepts differ as to their purpose, scope and signals. Metaphors clarify, illuminate, describe circumstances that otherwise are explainable at length. Puns, by showing unexpected relationships, please and amuse. Parodies also amuse while distorting aspects of the entity they are based on. Satires share the attributes of parody, but adds to them a biting criticism. Satires always aim at criticism of an issue, a person, a situation, etc., with a hope for some kind of impact in effecting change. Jokes can also be said to criticize. We have, furthermore, seen that
jokes can be a vent for frustrations. Overall, however, jokes are told to amuse. Some draw more laughter than others, some will only draw a knowing smile. The purpose of lies is outside the realm of the other concepts. Metaphor, pun, parody, and satire are further united by an intent to amuse. A liar, on the other hand, wants to conceal the truth; she does not want to entertain. A lie, hence, should not have any signals that might jeopardize its intent.

Metaphors, puns, parodies, satires, and jokes signal their presence. Signals can be found on different levels. The metaphor is signalled by its own expression: 'the real McCoy' needs a metaphorical interpretation. Puns do not necessarily have separate overt signals (the shape is part of the pun), thus, they can go unnoticed. Parody and satire distort different aspects of the work they are based upon, for example, the form, style, participants, situation, etc. But, additionally, all of the concepts mentioned are united in making use of irony or in being used for ironic purposes.
CHAPTER SIX. CONCLUSION

I have discussed irony here predominantly as it appears in spoken discourse. Traditionally, irony has been considered to be a figure in rhetoric and literature. Nevertheless, all treatments of irony agree that irony employs a feature of duality. This has usually been associated with opposition. In my treatment, I have expanded the concept of opposition and added the feature of multilayeredness as a necessary condition. I have also suggested the feature of incongruence as being ubiquitously present in all of the instances of irony that I have identified. Irony is for the most part an intended incongruence. A pair of readings co-exists, producing the incongruence. One reading does not replace the other. Both remain present in an interactive way. The hearer (or potential victim) and the audience in an ironic situation have to notice the irony. Irony which is not noticed fails.

In addition, I have identified background knowledge as a necessary factor in the interpretation of an expression as ironic. Thus, knowledge of personal characteristics of the participants involved is instrumental for the discovery of irony. The hearer (P2) and the audience (P3) evaluate a speaker's utterance or behavior. Awareness of discrepancies between the utterance and the former utterances or behavior of the speaker induces P2 and P3 to reassess the speaker.
These discrepancies, which are in most instances intended by the speaker, are the signals of an irony. Signals are found within the forms of language (intonation, lexicon, etc.), in the immediate context (gestures, kinesics, etc.), in the interplay of the two, or within the larger context. In its dependency on the context and the participants, irony is culture specific.

A speaker can choose to use irony, or can opt to be openly hostile, whichever she thinks the situation requires. Sometimes, a speaker will choose a socially inappropriate use of irony in a particular situation and will be reprimanded for it. I have described instances of this kind; for example, Jenninger's speech to the German Bundestag, which failed because his inappropriate strategy led to misinterpretation. On the other hand, by not using an ironic mode, a speaker at a party might feel out of place, and not able to participate. When irony is used in the wrong context of situation, a speaker's ironic intent will not be understood. Some people tend to be ironic most of the time, regardless of the situation, others less frequently, and still others never. The same holds true for the decoding of an irony. Some people are perhaps more 'irony-competent' than others. Irony, because of its dependency on the cultural context, participant background, etc., often emerges as a concept open to individual interpretation.
As there are many possibilities for the successful recognition of irony in discourse, there are also many possibilities for errors. Thus, even though irony appears as a mode embedded in the language that the speakers share, not every speaker has the ability to decode each instance of irony in a uniform way.

We have seen that, even though it has been extensively studied and described, irony remains resistant to precise definition and demarcation. Irony does not only find application at the propositional level, it can also function as a pervasive feature of a discourse, a lifetime, an era, or even of life itself.
Appendix A. Text A with translation

Das Wort zum Montag
(The word for Monday)
Meine Damen und Herren!
(Ladies and Gentlemen)
Wir haben alle unsere Sorgen und Nöte
und lassen uns nicht mit billigem Trost uber die
Last des Alltags hinwegtäuschen.
(We all have a cross to bear and we are not
willing to be mislead with cheap consolation about
our everyday load.)
Aber als ich neulich in meiner Musikbox blätterte,
da stieß ich auf folgende kleine Zeile:
(But the other day, when I skimmed through my
juke-box, I found the following little line:)
Theo, wir fahr'n nach Lodz
(Theo, we are going to Lodz)
Nun, was wollen uns diese Worte sagen?
(Now, what is it that those words want to tell
us?)
Da ist von einem Menschen die Rede.
Von einem ganz bestimmten Menschen.
Nicht Herbert,
nicht Franz,
nicht Willy,
nein, Theo ist gemeint.
(Well, a human being is mentioned. A very specific
human being. Not Herbert, not Franz, not Willy,
no, it is Theo that is spoken about.)
Aber um welchen Theo handelt es sich?
Ist es nicht auch jener Theo in uns Allen?
Jener Theo, der in so wunderbaren Worten vorkommt
wie
Theologie
Theodorant
Tee oder Kaffee.

(But which Theo is ist? Is it not the Theo in us all? The Theo who appears in such wonderful words as theology, theodorant, tea or coffee?)

Und an diesen geheimnisvollen Theo ist eine Botschaft gerichtet:
Theo, wir fahr'n nach Lodz.

(And this mysterious Theo is the receiver of a message: Theo we are going to Lodz.)

Vier fahr'n.
Da sind also vier Menschen unterwegs.
Und wer sind diese vier?
Sind es die vier Jahreszeiten?
Die vier Musketiere?
Oder sind es vier alle?

(Four are going. Four human beings are on their way. Who are those four? Perhaps the four seasons? The four musketeers? Or perhaps four (we) all?)

Schweigt Brüder.

(Hold your tongue, brothers.)

Da fällt mir in diesem Zusammenhang eine Geschichte ein.
Ich besuchte neulich einen Freund.
Einen Millionär.
Der glaubte, der unglücklichste Mensch der Welt zu sein,
weil ihm sein Rasierpinsel ins Klo gefallen war.
Da nahm ich ihn beiseite
und sprach:
'Freilich bist du übel dran
dass dir dein Rasierpinsel ins Klo gefallen ist.
Aber es gibt Leute
die sind viel schlechter dran als du.
Die haben noch nicht einmal einen Bart.'
Da fiel es ihm wie Schuppen aus den Haaren.

(That reminds me of a story. The other day I visited a friend. A millionar. He believed to be the most unfortunate man in the whole world because his shaving-brush had fallen into the commode. I took him aside and said: "Of course,
you are in a bad way, because your shaving-brush fell into the commode. But there are people that have more problems than you. They do not even have a beard.' And behold, the scales fell from his hairs.)

Und sollte nicht auch einer von uns
oder morgen.
oder heute,
oder vielleicht nicht.
Wer weiß.
(And should not one of us, or tomorrow, or today, or perhaps not at all. Who will know?)

Schönen guten Abend.
(Have a pleasant evening.)
Appendix B. Text B - the complete text

Symbols used:

<  terminal contour rise
>  terminal contour fall
/  breath group
[  simultaneously spoken
aaa slower, longer spoken
Adresse very pronounced spoken, not run together
--------
... length of pauses
...
....
1234 intonation
-  spoken in one breath
Bold instances of irony

Participants:

Martha - M: female, 21 years old, the bride
Helga - H: female, 21, Stefan's girlfriend
Karin - K: female, 21
Andrea - A: female, 21

Stefan - S: male, 24, Helga's live-in boyfriend
Cemal - C: male, mid-twentieth, Turkish, M's fiancée
E (no name): Scottish guy, cannot speak German

Situation: afternoon engagement party, Martha and Cemal are getting engaged, nobody really takes it very seriously. By the night they are already "disengaged."

The Text:

\[
\begin{align*}
2 & \quad 3 & 1 & \quad / \\
M: & \text{Ja is ja jut} & & (1)
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
2 & \quad 31 & \quad / \\
\text{ick spul nur vor} & & (2)
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
2 & \quad 3 & 1 & \quad > \\
\text{wees janich was hier drauf is} & & (3)
\end{align*}
\]
2 3 1 / 3 1 <
C: Was sollste aufnehm weiste (4)

Auf Klo hinstelln, ha (5)
(laughter)

2 3 1 / 1 >
das muβ sich automatisch einschalten Mensch (6)

2 3 1 /
die Leute da dürfen das .. (7)

2 3 1 13<
natürlich nichts davon wissen ja (8)

2 3 1 /
oh da komm Sachen raus (9)

2
Mann ja - ha ha ha

2 / 2 3 3 <
M: Natürlich sonst würdese ja nich uffs Klo

jehn ha ha (drowned in laughter) (11)
(laughter)

2 3 1 /
C: Ja, ich meine Gespräche nich (12)

2 1>
nich so allein scheidissen (13)

2 31 >
M: Monologe, vielleicht (14)

2 /
S: Fäkalästhetiker (15)

2 3 1 >
wo is der Wodka? (16)

2 / 2 3 2 1 >
K: Och Mann hab ich dich vergessen? (17)
M: Fäkalästhetiker ha ha ha

S: Karin! (accusingly)

M: Hei haste jehört was Stefan jesagt hat

C: wat

M: Fäkalästhetiker hahaha

C: Ruf aba ... den Norbert mal wieder an
(Dictates number to M. and E. ends up with the receiver)

H: Akurati, Akurati die ick mir

weeste

die wa ma zusammn jesehn ham sindet

A: Stell dir ma vor

fuffzig Maak kosten die jetzt

H: deswegn hab-ick-se mir

nämich nich jeholt ne

wo ick so jeizich bin

da mach-ick Konsumverzicht

(R dictates the number and gives the receiver to E)

E: Who am i talking to?
2 1 /
C: Norbert (33)

(now M gets the receiver)

2 3 < 2 1 3 <
M: Hallo bist du Norbert? (34)

2 3 1 <
Wo wohnst du denn? (35)

2 3 1 <
Ist weit von dir nach Spandau? (36)

2
C: Ja (37)

2 3 1 >
M: Na, wo wohnst du denn? (38)

31 2 3 1
Ja sonst könntest nach Spandau kommen (39)

1 2 1 >
Was soll ich denn in Spandau? (40)

(quotes in low voice)

3 1 2 3 1 >
Oh...m... ne Feier (41)

2 3 1 /
In welchem Rahmen? (quotes) (42)

2 3 1 >
C: Na, nun sag doch mal. (43)

(silence)

2 2 3 1 /
M: Oh... der is böse (44)

3 1 >
sagem mal (45)

(laughter)

2 3 <
C: Norbert (46)
brauchs doch ganicht mal böse zu sein (47)
hier is Cemal (48)
Ja ich wollte dich zuerst auch einladen (49)

Kannst du nicht (50)
(telephone conversation in background)
(unintelligible chatter)
S: haste schon Telefon (51)
K: ja .. ne noch nich (52)

13 2
M: Ej, wir könnt ja mal bei

3 1 13 <
Helga und Stefan anrufen nachher (53)

2 3 1 <
H: Ma sehn, wer da ranjeht, wa? (54)
(laughter)

2 3 1 /
M: Vielleicht die aus Westdeutschland (55)

2 3 2 /
die ha bei ha euch ha wohnt jetzt (56)

2 3 1 >
H: Ach, die ihr einjeladen habt. (57)

(doorbell rings)

2 3 1 <
S: Wer kommen jetzt (teases K) (58)

M: Eh ... wer kommen jetzt noch? (59)
C: du willst bei meiner Verlobung
nicht dabei sein (60)

M: ach so Keefe (61)

A: oder Peterchen (62)

C: Ja... heute nicht, ok, ok (63)

M: der hat kein Einsehn der Typ (64)

C: Ja wir ham ja auch so kurzfristig

.. eh die Sache beschlossen (65)

M: der hat so gestern is-er da (66)

hat-er da so mit so dussligen

Fremdwortern argumentiert (67)

Ja nich .. ja nich jesche .. jescheckt (68)

Stefan wir ham dich anjerufn (69)

Also (70)

wat sagste jetzt dazu (71)

Stefan Meier? (72)

(interruption)
(Champagne poured out for the engagement-ceremony, also some nice music)
K: Alles Gute, ne

C: Ihr braucht nicht zu weinen

S: Ein dreifach donnerndes Hochko

(the participants toast the happy couple)
(unintelligable chatter)

H: Tja liebe Martha

S: jetzt seit-er engaged

M: Jetzt sind-wer engaged

H: Jetzt müsste eigentlich einer so machen

(i.e. clink a glass to get attention)

M: und ne Rede halten

A: Helga

H: ne

M: Also im Namen unserer neugegründeten

Fan-Familie bedankenwer

ha ha uns bei allen

...fürs Kommen undsoweiter

(hugs and kisses by M and R)

H: Jetzt dürfüne ja
(laugher)

\[ 31 / 3 \ 1 \ 3 1 / \]
\[ M: \text{Naja halb erst halb erst} \] \hspace{1cm} (87)
\[ 2 / \]
\[ C: \text{halb} \] \hspace{1cm} (88)
\[ 2 / 3 1 / \]
\[ A: \text{Also laßt euch den vor-} \] \hspace{1cm} (89)
\[ 2 \ 31 > \]
\[ \text{bis zur Hochzeit dürfet nur halb} \] \hspace{1cm} (90)
\[ 2 \ 13 4 < \]
\[ M: \text{und ab der Hochzeit?} \] \hspace{1cm} (91)
\[ [ \ 2 \ 3 1 / \]
\[ [ A: \text{dürfet dreihundertprozentig} \] \hspace{1cm} (92)
\[ [ \ 2 \ 3 1 > \]
\[ [ C: \text{oder überhaupt nicht mehr} \] \hspace{1cm} (93)
\[ 2 \ 3 1 \]
\[ K: \text{Jetzt kommet schöner Satz} \] \hspace{1cm} (94)

(music)

\[ 2 \ 31 > \]
\[ M: \text{Och, Karin, wie siehst du aus?} \] \hspace{1cm} (95)
\[ 2 \ 1 \]
\[ K: \text{na ich hab mich eben mit...} \]
\[ 31 3 1 2 \]
\[ \text{mit euerm Geburtstagssekt...} \] \hspace{1cm} (96)
\[ 2 3 1 / \]
\[ \text{mit euerm Verlobungssekt ..} \] \hspace{1cm} (97)

(silence)

(unintelligible chatter)

\[ 2 3 1 2 / \]
\[ M: \text{Na geht ihr Beiden, ihr habt schon} \] \hspace{1cm} (98)

(referring to K and boyfriend)
S: wollter richtig verlobt sein

Ich hoffe

ihr wisst den Ernst der Lage

zu... zu schätzen (very formal)

M: Ja (short, feisty)

H: Ja, Stefan kann det, wa

M: Ja, der sollte Standesbeamter werden

bei dem würdenwer gleich...

A: Ja würd-ick ja meinen

der is der ungeeignetste hier...

Psychoaltötter

M: Keiner außer ihm is jetzt so geeignet

Wirklich, solltest Standesbeamter werden

A: könnte noch einiges mehr werden

M: Naja, Kinderchen

denn spart man schon schön

für unsere Hochzeitgeschenke
H: Wann wolle ich heiratn

M: Sobald die Papiere

außer Türkei da sind

muß er noch imma von-er Heimat kriegen

des wird wohl vier Monate ungenähr dauern

H: Wie heißen denn mit Nachnamn?

M: Gimez Gimez (unintelligible)

C: Wenichstens einer hat hier gratuliert

K: Eh, du Cemal
tust die andre Platte wieder rein ja ...

Is schon drin (silence)

S: Machen wa allet janz förmlich hier
M: du bist der einzige

der hier förmlich is

wie et sich jehört wa ...

acht, der einzige (lamenting)

A: der hat sich ja auch in die Lage

... versetzen könnt

M: Mit euch feiern wa noch ma wa

Zu unserer Hochzeit

da wird nur Stefan eingeladn...

da machen wir ein Besäufnis

(unintelligable chatter)

Wenn ick mein Geld krieger

H: müssen wern großes Fest machn

selba machn

Ick hab dir vorhin schon gratuliert...

(hurtful)

hab euch beiden schon gratuliert
S: Da war ja noch nischt

M: vorhin da war ja noch nischt

hintaher muß jedes mit uns anstossen

(unintelligable chatter)

S: ja, anstossen können wa och noch ma

A: am liebsten mit anderen Gläsern, wa Spatz

S: war des deins? ... 

keine ansteckenden Krankheiten

gloob ick jedenfalls

(unintelligable)
(apartment hunt)

M: Ihr habt wenichstens schon-ne

schöne Wohnung

und allet so (addressing S and H)

A: Kann ich ja und für

H: versuch doch och übner Erbbauverein

M: die Wohnung und allet

S: Wohnung kriegste doch immer

A: die andren
die ... sind doch ocht bald leer

H: Mach doch ocht über sone Genossenschaft

des is echt am jünstichstn

M: Wie kommt man denn da rein

oder hin oder wat?

H: Kaufsten Anteil

S: Geschäftsanteil koofen

H: so ..sone Art Aktie

für hundert Mark oder so

A: Ne det is meins jewesen

det hat Stefan jehabt

und jetzt nimmst du det ocht noch, wa

H: Alle Jahre

kriegste sogarn paar Mark Dividende

A: Also obwohl ick gleich jemacht habe

wat sich jehört

wünsch ich trotzdem alles Gute
...und ..undsoweiter (fades)

H: Kann dir ja ma die Adresse vom Erbbauverein jebn

kannste mal hinjehn

S: Ach Alte

mach doch nich son Uffstand

H: Na is doch waah

(fades)

du kannst dich mal erkundigen

C: Im Gegensatz da war ja

H: Wenn die viel Wohnungen freiam

C: Moment

den muß ich immer tragen oder wie

S: Ja, 'türlich

H: Nur wenn man alleine ausjeht
denn soll man-en abmachen

wollteste doch sagn

Wat nun (towards H)
31 <
C: aja

2 1 >
S: Ehrlich also nun

2 3 l /
C: beim abspülen undsoweiter

2 3 l 3 <
soll man doch abmachen oder

M: bei was?

H: doch

2 /
jetzt seither richtig

3 l >
C: abspülen oder so

2 3 l /
M: nein so nich

3 l <
H: wieso

2 3 l 3 <
der is doch Silber ne
(unintelligable)

M: die sind aba nur erst provisorisch

2
H: Was wünschter euch denn zur

3 l 1 >
Verlobung, Martha

2 3 l /
S: hab gleich die richtigen Dinger gefunden

2 3 l <
wat sachste dazu
(unintelligable)
S: war ne richtige adhoc Sache irgendwie wa

M: ja spontaan

nich Andrea, ha ha

H: ganz spontan

(unintelligable)

M: naja wenn wa erst mal ne Wohnung ham

S: seit wann kennter euch denn schon

Zwee Jahre oder so wa

M: Seit Januar

eine Woche vorm siebundzwanzigsten

... ja odern paar Tage vorher
Appendix B. Translations to Text B

T(1)
S: this was a real adhoc decision somehow
M: yeah, spontaneous, isn't that right, Andrea?

T(2)
S: ok, let's drink to their health again.
A: preferably with other people's glasses, isn't that so, Stefan?
S: oh, sorry, this was yours?
no communicable diseases
at least I hope so
...
A: the others they... are going to be empty soon
...
A: no, this was mine
Stefan used it
and now you wanna use it too, he

T(3)
C: put it in the bathroom
it has to turn itself on automatically
people should...
of course not notice it
I tell you, in those situations, a lot of stuff comes out!

T(4)
S: fecal aestheticist
where is the vodka?

T(5)
M: at least y'all already have a nice apartment or whatever
H: why don't you try with this company
M: apartment or whatever
S: you can always find an apartment
H: why don't you try this association
really seems to be the most reasonable
M: well, how do I get in there or over there or what?
H: buy into it
S: buy business shares
H: this is a kind of share
costs around 100 Marks
each year
you even get a few marks dividend
I can give you their address
perhaps you can go and see them
S: you're just a nag, don't make such a fuss
H: well, really
still, why don't you inquire
perhaps they have some available

T(6)

S: eh, you're just a nag, don't make such a fuss

T(7)

S: I guess y'all really wanna be engaged
I surely hope that you appreciate the gravity of the matter

T(8)

S: we're gonna be really formal here

T(9)

H: I am too stingy
I am going to renounce consumerism

T(10)

M: yesterday he argued with such silly foreign words
I didn't get it

T(11)

S: now you're engaged
M: now we're engaged

T(12)

M: well in the name of our newly founded fan-family
we'd like to thank you all

T(13)

M: of course, otherwise they wouldn't go to the bathroom

T(14)

M: ej, perhaps we can call H and S later
H: let's see who'll answer the phone
M: perhaps the woman from West-Germany
who is living with you
H: oh, the one that you all invited
S: well, who could that be?

M: only when one goes out by oneself
    then one doesn't need to wear it
    that's what you really wanted to say

H: now they can
M: well, a little only
C: a little
A: until the wedding you are only allowed a little
M: and after the wedding?
A: threethousand percent
C: or else not at all
Appendix C. Text C

Four participants:

Ruth: female
Karin: female
Peter: male
Detlef: male

K: In Deutschland schmeckt der Kaffee ganz anders der ist so'n bißchen saurer. also, den, den wir kaufen, dis is der Community House Dark Roast schmeckt sehr gut bevor der W. morgens aus dem Bett steigt muß er erst ne Tasse Kaffee haben

(Coffee tastes really different in Germany, a little more sour. Well, we buy Community House Dark Roast. Tastes pretty good. Before W. gets up in the morning, he needs a cup of coffee.)

[laughter]

D: im Ernst

(Really?)

R: schön daß wir uns hier um vier treffen wie zu Hause

(I am glad we are meeting here at four. Just like home.)

K: nich das gibt es hier garnicht - Nachmittags-Kaffeeklatsch am Sonntag trifft man sich nachmittags ja, aber hier macht man das garnicht ich trink nachmittags schon mal Kaffee und hab ein Keks oder so
(Yeah, they don't do this here - afternoon coffee-klatsch. On Sundays we meet in the afternoon, but here they don't do it. Sometimes I have a cup of coffee and a cookie in the afternoon.)

R: doch
   gestern war ich im Kaffeehaus zum Kaffee
   im Croissant Brioche
   das war super

(But I was yesterday in a coffee-house for a coffee at Croissant Brioche, that was great.)

K: das mach ich auch gern
   warst du allein

(I like to do that, too. Did you go by yourself?)

R: nein
   mit einem Freund von mir

(No, I went with a friend.)

K: da is auch schön
   da kann man immer wieder neu Kaffee trinken

(It's pretty nice. You can have a lot of refills there.)

R: des is aber in Houston eh so
   des is ok da

(Well, this is customs in Houston anyway. It's ok there.)

D: hm

K: warst du da noch nie
   das ist gleich hier 'nen paar Straßen weiter

(Have you been there before? It's right here, only a few blocks down.)

R: wir warn da mal zum Frühstück

(We went there for breakfast once.)

P: ah ja

(I remember)
K: hat dir nicht gefallen

(You didn't like it?)

[laughter]

P: ach das war wo wir waren
   das is ja kein Kaffeehaus

(I see, that's the place we went to, but that is
not a coffee-house.)

K: is recht klein
   man nimmt hier was man kriegt

(It's pretty small, well you take what you can
get.)

P: das is ja son son ...
   wenn du sagst Kaffeehaus
   dann stell ich mir was andres vor

(That is a ... When you say coffee-house, then I
imagine something else.)

K: was grösseres

(Something bigger.)

P: hm hm

D: Kaffeehaus gehört zu Wien
   aber da gibt's ja so viele

(Coffee-house belongs to Vienna, but there they
have so many.)

R: das bekannteste ist das Cafe Landsmann

(The most famous is the Cafe Landsmann.)

D: wo is das

(Where is this?)

R: am Burgtheater
   des is so'n richtig olles Renommier-Cafe

(Near the theatre. That's a real old show-off.)

[unintelligible chatter]
K: des is eben
    der Kaffee is da so teuer
    da gehste
    ne Tasse 2 Mark 50
    am Sonntag müßte'n Kännchen nehmen
    is 4 Mark
    oder wenn de draußen sitzt
    auch 'en Kännchen
    warum eigentlich?

(Well, its ... the coffee is so expensive. There you go, a cup is 2.50. Sundays you have to take more for 4 marks or if you wanna sit ourside also more. I always wondered why?)

P: naja, wenn de denkst
    wie dünn der Kaffee hier ist

(Well, if you think how weak the coffee is here.)

K: ne aber bei Croissant Brioche schmeckt der ganz gut

(No, but at Croissant Brioche, it tastes pretty good.)

D: ah geh

(Not so)

P: na is doch recht

(???)

R: Blümchenkaffee

(Flower coffee.)

D: jetzt gehts aber jetzt gehts aber jetzt

(???)

R: Blümchenkaffee

K: na hier der Kaffee
    das stimmt
    der is schon nich sehr stark

(The coffee here, you are right, it's not very strong.)
D: Moment mal
    oder redet's jetzt vom deutschen Kaffee
(Just a minute or are you talking about German coffee?)

[laughter]

R: vor allen Dingen darfst in österreich nie in
    ein Kaffeehaus gehen
    und sagen
    du willst 'nen Kaffee
(First of all, you should never go to a coffeehouse in Austria and ask for a coffee.)

D: das stimmt
    möchten Se'n Kurzen
(I agree. Would you like a .)

R: n' Schwarzen
    is wie gehst in ein Restaurant
    und sagst du möchtest was zu essen
(A ???. Is like you go into a restaurant and say, you would like something to eat.)

D: ein Kurzen kaufen
    a Melange
    a Schwarzen
    a Milchkaffee
    was möchten's denn gern
    verstehst du
[unintelligible chatter]

R: wenn die Deutschen dann sagen
    ich hatt gern nen [kaf ]
(When the Germans say, I would like a .)

P: [kaf ] ja

D: [kaf ]

P: das find ich so ätzend
    das klingt so furchtbar
(That sounds horrible.)
D: das das Kaf  
[  
]  
(95)
P: das Kaf  
[  
]  
(96)

K: ich hab mal ...  
kennt ihr so Muckefuck - Mocca Faux  
des hab ich mal bei uns im Linguistics  
Department an die Tafel geschrieben  
das hat jemand gleich wegge...  
wenn de des auf englisch aussprichst  
(97)  
(98)  
(99)  
(100)  
(101)  
(102)

(Do you know about Muckefuck. I put it on the blackboard in the Linguistics Department. Somebody immediately erased it. If you pronounce that in English!)

P: [  
]  
[laughter]  
(103)
P: [  
]  
(104)
K: Mocca Faux  
[laughter]  
(105)
D: shit  
(106)
Appendix D. TEXT D

This text is an excerpt of a fragment of a radio broadcast from Feb. 19, 1970. I have selected only those parts here that are important for my discussion. The whole text (16,360 words) can be found in Texte deutscher Umgangssprache (1972).

The five participants (discussants) are all figures in public life: aa (moderator), ab, ac, ad and ae.

aa: Ich will es nur im Raum stehen lassen (1)
ich meine (2)
wir können das hier nicht entscheiden (3)
wir müssen jetzt aber (4)
auch weil die Zeit uns ja schließlich sonst davonläuft (5)
zu der Frage der finanziellen Konsequenz kommen (6)
ennen Sie darauf bitte eingehen würden (7)

ab: .... (talks about the problematic of the cost for lowering the age for Rentenversicherung, namely of about 10 Billion DM)
es steigen alle Renten an (8)
damit ergibt sich die höhere Summe (9)
wir sind aber sicher (10)
daß nicht alle Sechzigjährigen bereits (11)
von dieser Möglichkeit Gebrauch machen (12)
wenig Prozent davon Gebrauch machen (13)
ist natürlich nicht vorhersehbar (14)
aus den Erfahrungen (15)
die wir bei den damaligen Pensionierungs-aktionen (16)
wen ich so sagen darf (17)
in einigen Bereichen dieser Rezession gehabt haben (17)

(he goes on to say that only about one third of the eligible people would make use of it. The discussion now evolves about the numbers. ac comments to this effect and calls the numbers optimistic.)

ac: .... (18)
ich glaube (19)
es ist nicht richtig (19)
en wenn man die Auswirkungen nur für neunzehn- (20)
hundert einundsechzig sieht (20)
Sie wissen alle (21)
daß die Rentenversicherung finanziell, wie es
anlässlich der Verabschiedung des dritten Rentenversicherungsgesetzes hieß vor kurzem finanziell auf eine sogenannte gesunde Basis gestellt worden ist wo sehr genau bis 1985 errechnet worden ist dass wir voraussichtlich mit einem Beitrag von 18 Prozent den sogenannten Rentenberg das heißt also das ungünstige Verhältnis von aktiver versicherter Bevölkerung und Rentnern werden überwinden können

(some others agree with ac, e.g. ad, who also refers to the added problem of the dwindling working force, who cover the expenses for the old age insurance of the pensioners.)

ad: ich möchte mal sagen es ist doch üblich daß man mit fünfundsechzig Jahren die Leute nach Hause schickt nicht wahr

(talks about the decrease in the active working population by one third and the ensuing problematic)

und wir haben den ganzen Salat ich glaube man kann das etwa schätzen das waren also etwa dann schon das wird ein Fehlbetrag von etwa 600.000 Arbeitskräften sein die wir dann wieder aus m Ausland decken müssen, nich

(the discussion now also evolves around the Gastarbeiter problem who will also require old age benefits. ab then takes the word and summarizes and adds some points to the discussion. The discussion-leader aa cuts him short:)

aa: Sie sind sicherlich noch nicht am Ende ich kann mir ungefähr denken was Sie noch sagen wollen aber wir wollen mal eben Baden-Baden das Wort geben Baden-Baden hat das Wort
Appendix E. Text E

Gegendarstellung von Wolfgang Ebert, Oktober 1988

In letzter Zeit treffe ich dauernd auf ehemalige Genossen, beispielsweise 68er-Veteranen, die mir ungefragt beteuern, niemals links (radikal, Stalinisten, Maoisten) gewesen zu sein. Um es uns allen etwas einfacher zu machen, sei dieses Allzweckformular angeboten.

Ich ... war niemals ordentliches (zählendes, förderndes, führendes) Mitglied der DKP, KPD/ML, RAF, SPD, Rote Zellen, des KB, der Falken und gehörte nie (nur ganz kurz) der Gesellschaft für deutsch-albanische (tibetanische, sowjetische, chinesische, kubanische) Freundschaft an. Etwaige Unterschriften von mir, die das Gegenteil beweisen sollen, sind gefälscht (getürkt, unter Drogeneinfluß, Vortäuschung falscher Tatsachen abgepresst worden).

Ich habe auch niemals (nur gelegentlich) Geld für die Rote Hilfe (Timor, El Salvador, Mocambique) gesammelt (gespendet) und mich an der Hilfsaktion "Nähzeug (Schreibmaschinen, Nagelfeilen, Bleistifte) für Laos" so gut wie nie beteiligt. Auch habe ich nie aus Sympathiegründen Kaffee aus Nicaragua, Tee aus China oder Kakao aus Angola getrunken.

Ich habe niemals in einer WG (konspirativen, hausbesetzten Wohnung) gelebt (gewohnt).
Ich habe niemals an marxistischen Zirkeln (KPdSU-Seminaren, DDR-Jugendlagern) teilgenommen.

Ich habe die UZ (Rote Fahne, Konkret, taz) nicht abonniert (Abo gekündigt, nur flüchtig gelesen, nur immer als Einwickelpapier verwendet).

Ich habe niemals Stalin (Ho Chi Minh, Tito, Castro, Lenin, Honecker) hochleben lassen.

Ich habe noch nie in der ersten (dritten, letzten) Reihe an Anti-Raketens- (Anti-Atomkraft-, Anti-Giftgasdeponien-) Demos teilgenommen.

Videoaufzeichnungen, auf denen ich angeblich die "Internationale" (Marseillaise, DDR-Hymne) singe, wurden heimtückisch aus dem Zusammenhang gerissen.


Ich erkläre hiermit feierlich, daß ich in meinen Büchern (Bildern, Gedichten, Chorwerken, Filmen, Skulpturen) niemals die Welt- (russische, chinesische, kubanische) Revolution verherrlicht habe.

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