Een denkraam - Blending idioms in *de Bommel saga*

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Introduction to this thesis

In this MA thesis, I argue that conceptual blending of mental spaces (as described by Fauconnier and Turner (2002), and Brandt and Brandt (2005)) enables the understanding of metaphors and imagery. In order to do so, I analyse the blending of idioms in ten quotes from the Dutch literary comic series *'De Avonturen van Tom Poes'* ('The Adventures of Tom Puss'), more commonly referred to as the *Bommel saga*. The series was written by Marten Toonder and got issued in the daily newspaper *De Telegraaf* from 1941-1986.

Considering the usage of metaphors and verbal imagery is one of the vital elements in the writings of Marten Toonder, the examples of verbal imagery found in the corpus will be analyzed on a sentential level. The focus of this analysis lies on the function of integration networks and their complex nested structures. In this thesis, I propose that the nested integration network designed by Per-Aage Brandt (2005) can be used to showcase the concept of a *frame*: a long-term mental space network of knowledge and information (Fauconnier & Turner 2002; Dancygier 2012; Ziem 2014).

The quotes used in the analysis were selected by yours truly. They are taken directly from the reissued stories by publisher *De Bezige Bij* (2010). These volumes remain true to the lay-out of the newspaper editions of the comic, and only have minor textual edits done by certified editors in order to remove spelling errors from the original texts.

This thesis is organized as follows: **Chapter 1. General information** provides an overview of information on the Bommel saga itself, its context of publication, the author, and of the context of the Dutch language. **Chapter 2. Theoretical background**, provides a brief overview of cognitive linguistic theories on blending, including the approaches of Fauconnier and Turner (2002), Brandt and Brandt (2005.a.b.; 2005), Dancygier (2006, 2012), and Ziem (2014). I also introduce a new type of integration network ('the Bommodel'), which I personally designed to analyse Toonder's metaphorical language specifically. This chapter also includes some alterations on the cognitive blending theory by Fauconnier and Turner (2002) based on the semiotic theories by Greimas (1966, via Nöth 1990), Eco (1979, 1994), and Van Engelenhoven (2019.b). **Chapter 3. An analysis of ten quotes from the Bommel saga** provides the analysis of ten quotes that are directly taken from the Bommel saga, modelled after the theory presented in chapter 2. **Chapter 4. Conclusions** contains a short summary of my findings and a brief discussion of future research possibilities as well as the shortcomings of this thesis.

1. General information

Introduction

Before we go down the rabbit hole that is cognitive blending and applying it to Marten Toonder's metaphor-bound writings, it is important to be aware of the context of his stories - or more importantly, to know what the Bommel saga is exactly. Although I assume some familiarity with the Bommel saga from my readers, I still claim it is important to give some context to the series, if only to pay homage to its writer, Marten Toonder.

In the book *The Language of Stories* (2012), Barbara Dancygier mentions that analyzing literature through the lens of cognitive blending may help an audience in gaining a deeper, structuralized understanding of meaning and narrative. Whereas literary studies may put much importance on analyzing a literary work in its context and context only, cognitive blending allows for a less restrained reading, which may create new insights in return (Dancygier 2012). Taking into account that Marten Toonder's main goal in writing was to create 'ageless' if not 'timeless' stories (Toonder 2010.a, Driebergen 2012), this thesis intends to scrutinize his words and messages through a 'timeless' analysis. As such, this thesis presents a linguistic reading of Toonder's language, rather than a literary one. In spite of this notion, of course these kind of analyses cannot and should not exist within a vacuum. Context is necessary to gain a full reading of certain stories, and considering the Bommel saga appeared in newspapers, I stress that understanding its context also is necessary in order to analyze its phrases, however timeless they were intended to be.

On another note, although I also expect my readers to be at least familiar with Dutch, the third subchapter gives a brief overview of the current sociolinguistic situation of the Netherlands, and a short overview of the language's genealogy.

To summarize: in this chapter, I give a brief overview the Bommel saga itself, including the context of publication, general themes, and importance to its Dutch audience (*1.1 The Bommel saga: a literary comic series*), a brief summary of the author's life story (*1.2 Marten Toonder: the man*), and a brief introduction[1] to the Dutch language (*1.3 Dutch: an overview*).

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[1] This is not a grammar sketch, however, as I expect my readers to be at least somewhat familiar with Dutch.

1.1 The Bommel saga: a literary comic series

De Bommel saga (referred to as 'the Bommel saga' in this thesis at almost all times) is a literary comic series by Marten Toonder and Toonder Studios. The series ran in the Dutch newspaper *De Telegraaf* during 1941-1987, containing 177 separate full stories. Comic magazine *Donald Duck* (a children's magazine starring many characters from the Walt Disney Studios) also published 77 regular comics during 1950-1969 and 1980-1988 (Toondercompagnie BV 2019).

Starting 1967, publisher *De Bezige Bij* published Toonder's personal favorite stories in paperback booklets. Later on, all 177 newspaper comics got reissued once again by publisher *Panda*, which cooperated with *Het Haagsch Bommel Genootschap* ('The Hague Bommel Society') during 1999-2002. In 2008-2018, yet another edition of the 177 newspaper comics got published by publisher *De Bezige Bij*, consisting of 66 hardcover books, containing three full stories per volume (Driebergen 2010; Driebergen & Welsink 2019.a, 2019.b; Toondercompagnie 2019). The quotes analyzed in this thesis are taken directly from the books published by *De Bezige Bij* in 2010.

The comic series - with exception of the 77 stories that were featured in the *Donald Duck* magazine - consists of three comic panels per weekly issue (and in the *De Bezige Bij* 2010 publications, per page). The comics do not contain any text blurbs, while a literary text describes the events and dialogue of the story directly below the comic strip.

Initially, *De Avonturen van Tom Poes* ('The Adventures of Tom Puss') was aimed at a younger audience, but after having run six issues in *De Telegraaf*, the comic series began taking a different turn. As the story-telling matured, it eventually gained the colloquial name *De Bommel saga.* The series gained its name due to the popularity of its deuteragonist, lord Olivier B. Bommel, as well as its subtle parodying of social and political themes (Toonder 2010.a; Driebergen 2012; Hazeu 2012; Driebergen & Welsink 2019.a, 2019.b). I would like to note that the names of its main characters, Tom Poes and Olivier B. Bommel, have been translated to English as 'Tom Puss' and 'Oliver B. Bumble' by others respectively, but I decided to keep their names untranslated throughout this thesis, as they are the given proper names of characters that I personally am most familiar with.

The Bommel saga tells the stories and (mis)adventures in the lives of Tom Poes, a small, clever white cat, and lord Olivier 'Ollie' B. Bommel, a bumbling, stumbling brown bear of noble descend. The series is set in an antromorphogical world, which is populated by animal characters who look, talk, and behave almost exactly like human beings. Tom Poes and lord Bommel are accompanied by a colorful cast of fellow animals, each of which has a remarkable and often punny name, as well as a specific language tick or catchphrase. The stories often parody the real world and tend to carry a hefty aesop. In short, much like the stories by the writer Aesop himself, the Bommel saga is focussed on the stories of animals as metaphorical mirror to human society.

Most of the stories take place in the fictional city of *Rommeldam* and its surrounding areas, most notably being lord Bommel's ancestral (or so he claims) castle, *Slot Bommelstein* ('Castle Bommelstein'). Lord Bommel, Tom Poes, and their supporting cast often go treasure hunting or get into trouble due to lord Bommel's antics, which causes misfortune to befall both him as well as his associates. In spite of all this, however dark each of the narratives may get, each story always does get a happy ending.

The series is known for its deceivingly critical perception of society, its enchanting literary character, and its memorable cast (Toonder 2010.b, 2012; Driebergen 2012). The popularity of its characters can be attested by the popularity of the book *De Bommelparade* by Paul Verhaak, which got published in 2012 and got reissued in 2016: the book contains an elaborate collection of all 1400 characters that appeared in the Bommel saga.

The author, Marten Toonder, wasn't much interested in relaying social criticism, although he very much meant to represent the contemporary social climate of the Netherlands (Hazeu 2012). In interviews (2005, 2010), he mentioned that his inner compulsion to write stories was fuelled by a need for escapism, rather than a compulsion to reflect on the real world in writing (Toonder 2010.a; Driebergen 2012; Hazeu 2012; Driebergen & Welsink 2019.b). During his writing career, he had taken great interest in Jung's ideas on narratives and the 'collective consciousness': the idea that basic, conceptual archetypes of humanity - symbols - manifest themselves as characters and themes in each and every story ever told.

Toonder treated his characters as if they were alive, even if they did not truly exist in the real world. He often refers to his inspiration as drawn from 'the other world' or 'the dream world', the source of his - and humanity's overall - imagination (Toonder 2005, 2010.a; Driebergen 2012; Hazeu 2012). Amongst other things, he says the following on this topic:

"Zo'n verhaal schrijft zich eigenlijk vanzelf; de verhaalfiguren gaan een eigen leven leiden. Dan heb je als schrijver iets aangeboord waarvan jezelf niet weet dat het goed is. Iets dat sterker is dan jezelf."

'In a sense, such a story just writes itself; the characters start having their own lives. [When that happens] as a writer, you have touched upon something great that you yourself do not know to be [anything] good. Something that is stronger than you yourself.'

(Via: Toonder 2010.a)

His personal favorite stories are those he views as 'timeless' and 'human': the ones that do not carry direct references to the contemporary world, but rather those that carry a message that is understandable to everyone, no matter when it is read (Toonder 2010.a; Driebergen 2012; Driebergen & Welsink 2019.b). Even so, originating as a newspaper comic, the entirety of the Bommel saga does contain stories that directly took inspiration from contemporary times, parodying the Dutch political and social climate alike - and heavily, too. Most of these stories are written before and during the 1950's, a period in which Toonder describes himself as 'not taking [his writings] seriously'. Although his later writings are less concerned with containing contemporary messages, many of his stories contain purposeful, powerful jabs at climate change, industrialization, bureaucracy, and politics (Driebergen & Welsink 2019.b).

Due to the themes of his writings as well as his literary style - which is filled to the brim with metaphors, parables, and idiomatic language - the Bommel saga often is referred to as 'literature'. Catchphrases such as '*als je begrijpt wat ik bedoel*' ('if you understand what I mean'), '*een simpele doch voedzame maaltijd*' ('a simple yet nutritious meal'), and '*verzin een list!*' ('think of a plan!') and vocabulary such as '*denkraam*' ('thinking window') '*minkukel*' (a derogatory term for a dumb person), and '*bovenbaas*' ('upper boss') have become an integral part of the Dutch language (Driebergen 2012). Personally, I noted that many of my peers in 2019 are not aware that these terms or phrases originated from the Bommel saga, although they do make use of them.

In 1954, Toonder was laureated with a membership of the *Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde* ('Society of Dutch Literature') for his work on the Bommel saga, in spite of the stories being comics. Later on, when publisher *De Bezige Bij* began publishing the comic series in booklets, the publishing company acknowledged the series as Dutch literature as well. At the time, literary critics did not involve themselves much with the Bommel saga. Nowadays, however, it must be noted

that the Bommel saga is categorized as the only literary comic of the Netherlands (Driebergen 2012; Hazeu 2012; Driebergen & Welsink 2019.b).

Considering this thesis focuses mainly on the analysis of quotes from the Bommel saga, it is important to introduce its author: Marten Toonder. Down below is a brief synopsis of Marten Toonder's biography.

Picture 1: Marten Toonder

(Via: Toondercompagnie BV)

Marten Toonder (1912-2005) was born in Rotterdam, the largest port of the Netherlands, on the 2nd of May. He was raised by his mother, Trientje, while his father, Marten Sr. was a seafaring captain who often was away from home. Young Marten did not spend much time with his father during his childhood although he grew up hearing stories of his adventures and the stormy seas he surely traveled, which sparked the first flames of Toonder's imagination as he started wondering about the world. His father, who later on also got involved in his writing career, heavily influenced his writings. Marten Sr. eventually got encapsulated in the character Captain Wal Rus, a friend of lord Bommel's and a seafaring captain (who, as you may have guessed, is depicted as a walrus). Many of the people Marten Toonder interacted with on a personal level eventually got their own feature as a Bommel saga character. Toonder himself denied that he was doing this on purpose, although he also did acknowledge that there were some rather obvious similarities between his own, real life experiences and the appearances of characters in his stories (Toonder 2010.a; Hazeu 2012).

Marten Toonder (henceforth referred to as Toonder) himself mentioned multiple times that he always did have a penchant for the imaginative, for telling stories. In interviews, he describes himself as a storyteller first and foremost, and as artist and writer second (Toonder 2010.a; Driebergen 2012). During his youth, he would often share his imaginary exploits with his younger brother and best friend, Jan Gerhard Toonder, and this tradition of storytelling continued well into adulthood. Young Marten would tell Jan Gerhard bedtime stories - usually ending in cliffhangers that they would pick up on the next day. They continued their plays and games into teenagehood.

Toonder's love for comics began when Marten Sr. started sending him and his brother newspaper comics and actual comic books from the United States, which they would read eagerly and use as their own narrative tools for stories. They began cutting out pictures and arranged them to their own fashion. Through these scrap comics, the fairy tales their mother would tell them, and their own narrative plays, the siblings both developed a taste for story and urged one another on to create their own. In adulthood they often collaborated as well - Jan Gerhard would write texts that Marten then would illustrate. Escapism and fantasy worlds have been following the both of them ever since they

started imagining, and kept on playing a large role in both of their lives. It is no surprise that both brothers wound up becoming storytellers in their own right. Marten Toonder became the famed author of a literary comic, and Jan Gerhard Toonder became a well-known author. (Toonder 2010.a; Driebergen 2012; Hazeu 2012).

During Toonder's teenage years, he also got romantically involved with his close friend Phiny Dick (born as Afeline 'Fientje' Kornélie Dik). They married as soon as they reached adolescence. Toonder and Phiny shared their fascination for the imaginative as well as their love for art, and spurred one another on to create, too. Phiny grew into an illustrator herself, and was the first to publish a comic, starring a white cat named Miezelientje (said to be Tom Poes' in-story cousin). Although Tom Poes was Toonder's creation, it was Phiny who actually wrote the first few scripts for the Bommel saga during its first run, before she returned the character to her husband, telling him to write his own stories (Toonder 2010.a; Hazeu 2012). Although Jan Gerhard claims the name 'Tom Poes' is his wife's invention, Phiny claimed it was hers. Undoubtedly, however, the name is a Dutch pun on the pastry *tompouce,* which both ladies loved. 'Tompouce' sounds roughly the same as 'Tom Poes', the first name 'Tom' being a proper name, the surname 'Poes' being the Dutch term for 'cat' (Hazeu 2012).

In 1931, Marten Sr. took Toonder on a journey to Buenos Aires in Argentina, where he incidentally got into touch with Jim Davis, an assistant comic artist working for Disney. This meeting impressed him tremendously and inspired him to delve even further into animation and comics. This journey to Argentina ended up being the stone that launched the avalanche: Toonder, who had always been enchanted and fascinated by art in general, now wanted to become a comic artist and animator himself. At his return, he enrolled the Rotterdam Academy, a rather prestigious visual arts academy. He left the Rotterdam Academy soon after, however, and taught himself the art of drawing comics (Toonder 2010; Hazeu 2012)..

Together with Phiny and their young son, Eiso, Toonder eventually moved to Leiden in order to start working at a printing and illustrating press. Shortly after moving, he figured that he genuinely could not stand the work, and left to begin his own one-man illustrating and ghostwriting business. At the urging of his brother, who had become a successful writer in the meanwhile, Toonder and his family moved to Amsterdam after having lived in Leiden for a couple of years (Hazeu 2012). This turned out to be a crucial moment in their life, as Amsterdam became the city where Toonder began booking successes.

During his stay in Leiden, Toonder had gotten into touch with Fritz Gottesmann, the owner of Diana Edition International Press Service. Gottesmann's company bought and sold comic rights on an international scale, and Toonder was taken on as a freelance comic artist. Gottesmann urged Toonder to also start publishing original comics rather than to only take on commissions - and as such, Toonder received the opportunity to introduce a new character to his oeuvre: a white cat that would be easy to draw and animate - or rather, the very character that would later become Toonder's clever protagonist, Tom Poes.

When Germany occupied the Netherlands in 1940, Gottesmann decided to leave Diana Edition in Toonder's hands, as he himself had to go into hiding. He did not survive the war, leaving the company to Toonder (Hazeu 2012).

While the German occupation of the Netherlands continued, newspaper *De Telegraaf* had grown interested in publishing the adventures of Toonder's white cat. The newspaper had run out of Mickey Mouse comics due to the ongoing war, and was looking for new comics to publish. Toonder took on the offer. His new comic series consisted of only a couple of panels without text blurbs, with the textual story placed underneath the pictures to provide the drawings with proper context - marking the

very birth of *De Avonturen van Tom Poes* (The Adventures of Tom Poes'). In the first few stories of the series, the famed lord Bommel did not appear, although he would steal the show shortly after his introduction to the comic series in 1941. After lord Bommel's introduction in the story *'In de tovertuin'* ('In the magic garden'), the series grew in popularity fast: whereas Tom Poes was clever and responsible, lord Bommel was emotional and bumbling, and they made for an interesting duo (Hazeu 2012).

Soon after his surge in fame, Toonder began working together with Joop Geesink in order to continue working on an animated movie, which had been Toonder's ultimate dream ever since his meeting with Jim Davis, years prior. In order to establish a proper animation team as well as gather proper funding, Toonder and Geesink founded Toonder-Geesink Productions, a studio that specialized in comics and animation. They employed several artists and script writers. Eventually, after remarkable success that did not go without financial disagreements between Geesink and Toonder, they decided to split up the company. Toonder continued on as Toonder Studios himself, where he and his employees would continue drawing comics as well as working on animated movies (Hazeu 2012).

Eventually, the effects of the German occupation began to show itself to Toonder on a personal level: his employees and his comics were put under close scrutiny and their right to free speech (and thus, creativity) became more limited by the week. He (as well as his employees and brother) became part of the *Kultuurkamer* ('Chamber of Culture') - as only artists that were part of this organization would be allowed to publish their work during the German occupation. Toonder did not hold the *Kultuurkamer* in high regard at the time, although he did not voice his critique openly (Hazeu 2012; Driebergen & Welsink 2019.c).

After the war ended, in 1945, Toonder got persecuted for collaboration with the Germans, due to working for the newspaper *De Telegraaf*, which had been openly sympathetic towards the German occupation during the war. However, during the case, it turned out that Toonder - although not exactly very interested in war politics during WWII either, as his memoires would show - had kept up a farce during the war: Toonder Studios had been the main underground publisher of *Metro*, a Dutch resistance paper that his brother Jan Gerhard was heavily involved with. Toonder's comic series had not openly criticized the German occupation in order to keep the German occupants from suspecting his employees of collaborating with the Dutch Resistance. Once this became public knowledge, charges against Toonder were dropped and he received a *Verzetsherdenkingskruis* ('Resistance Memorial Cross'), a medal awarded to members of the Dutch resistance after the war. Toonder's memoires, however, showed that he also did not concern himself much with war matters, and had been more interested in working on his animation movie in relative peace (Hazeu 2012).

Due to the popularity of Toonder's comic series, many adventures of Tom Poes (and lord Bommel) were drawn and some were even written by other comic artists, many whom would make a name for themselves as well. The author's rights to the comic remained in Toonder's hands himself though - not unlike Walt Disney, his main inspiration - and every comic was published under his name, even if he did not write all of them himself. Literary critics note that only the comics he wrote and published himself should be counted as literature (Toonder 2010.a; Driebergen 2012; Hazeu 2012).

In 1964, Toonder and Phiny migrated to a small castle in Ireland, leaving Toonder Studios behind in order to fully commit to working on their own comics. Toonder moved back to the Netherlands after his wife passed away in 1990. He remarried six years later, although his wife, Tera de Mayes Oyens, passed away shortly after (Hazeu 2012).

Although he did not continue writing into old age, Marten Toonder still was willing to be part of many interviews about his stories, his life's work, and his imagination. He passed away in 2005 (Hazeu 2012).

1.3 Dutch: an overview

Dutch is the national language of the Netherlands, one of the official languages of Belgium and Suriname, and is the language of administration in the Lesser Antilles (Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao, Sint-Maarten, and Sint-Eustatius), and to some regard, in the Republic of Indonesia as well. Afrikaans, one of the languages in South Africa, is its daughter language (Tikkanen 2011).

In 2012, Dutch had about 16,000,000 in speakers in Netherlands while the language has about 23,069,480 speakers across the world. (Simons & Charles 2018). Considering this thesis is concerned with the Dutch of one particular person - the native Dutchman Marten Toonder - I will focus only on Dutch spoken and written in the Netherlands.

Map 1: the Netherlands down below shows an image of the Netherlands. The Netherlands is neighbored by Germany and Belgium (Britannica Online Academic Edition 2017).

Map 1: the Netherlands

(Via: Britannica Online Academic Edition).

Dutch, known as *Nederlands* in Dutch itself, consists of several dialects. The Netherlands has one more official national language, Frisian, or *Fries* in Dutch, a language spoken in the northern province of Friesland ('Frisia' in English). The language varieties Limburgs, Nedersaksisch, Jiddisch, and Sinti-Romanes are acknowledged as regional languages by the national government as well (Rijksoverheid 2019.a). The variety of Dutch spoken in Belgium is considered a separate language by some but not by others, and is known by the name *Vlaams* ('Flemish' in English) (Stroop 2003).

Although Dutch is a dynamic, living language, it has been standardized into *Standaardnederlands*, Standard Dutch, which is commonly used as the standard language of institutions (e.g. churches, businesses, and educational institutes) and government agencies. Standard Dutch is mainly based on the varieties spoken in the province of *Noord Holland* ('North Holland'), most notably the area surrounding the city of Haarlem (De Vries 2001; Stroop 2003). Every couple of years, *de Nederlandse*

Taalunie ('the Dutch Language Union') revises grammar, spelling, and pronunciation rules alike. The existence of the language union dates back to 1912 (Nederlandse Taalunie 2015). Standard Dutch is often regarded as the 'proper variety' of the language. All other varieties are considered non-standard Dutch (Stroop 2003). Currently, aside from Standard Dutch, all high-school level students are obliged to take some courses in English language and literature as well (Rijksoverheid 2019.b).

   Genealogically, Dutch is part of the Indo-European language family. The language is part of the Germanic language family, which is divided into East Germanic and Northwest Germanic. Dutch is part of the Northwest Germanic branch, where it is part of the West Germanic, Low Franconian branch in particular. It is closely related to German and English (Hammarström, Forkel, & Haspelmath 2018). It is a Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) language, although the language abides to V2 word order: a conjugated verb is moved to the second position in a main clause. It is a semi-agglutinating language (Simons & Charles 2018).

2. Theoretical background

Introduction

Many studies in linguistics are ostensibly aimed at the study of form rather than of meaning: how to analyse language structures, how to find general language patterns, and how to construct meaning derived from form. Or rather, how to manipulate meaning through the systematic analysis of language structure. Linguistics is not the only science that is mainly concerned with the analysis of form: mathematics, psychology, economy, almost all branches of science as we know it experienced and took part in the rise of form research during the past century or so. From Noam Chomsky revealing the complexity of linguistic forms to Kurt Gödel showing that mathematical questions can be put into purely formal schemes and using formal analysis to analyse form itself. The study of form and structure has become one of the main aims within science itself (Fauconnier & Turner 2002). If I were to exaggerate a little, it could be said that the contemporary academic quest for gaining knowledge mainly consists of distilling more complex and accurate forms from one another.

Even so, as an appeal to common knowledge, it must be noted that form is not the same as meaning. Form gives rise to meaning, but carries no substance all by itself. It is the human mind that gives meaning to the form. It is the human mind that is able to create complex systems of meaning, which are expressed through complex formal systems in turn. Form is only a means to construct, express, and understand meaning. Without the innate power of the human mind to conduct meaning from form, form is nothing but an empty shell (Turner 1996, 2013; Fauconnier & Turner 2002).

Now, how to research meaning itself? How come the human mind is able to weave complex structures of meaning, some of which are not even accessed consciously? By creating yet another form as to explain and express the complex workings of imagination, of course. Fauconnier & Turner (2002) propose the idea of *conceptual blending*, which in turn derives from Grady et al's *mental space theory* (1999). Through the theory of conceptual blending, which I will elaborate on down below in *2.1 Mental spaces and conceptual blending*, the human mind's hidden complexity and perchance for distilling and deriving meaning from form could be explained.

In section *2.2 The Bommodel*, I will showcase a model of my own design, fitted to the analysis of quotes from the Bommel saga. In section *2.3 Semiotics, semiosis, and mental spaces - an alternative approach*, I will introduce the benefits of an interdisciplinary take on cognitive linguistics and show the function as well as the limitations of the Bommodel.

2.1 Mental spaces and conceptual blending

Mental spaces, as described by Fauconnier and Turner (2002), are small and temporary conceptual packets of information and knowledge that subconsciously form as we think and talk. As Dancygier (2006) stated, they can be prompted by the use of linguistic forms - whether this is thought, discourse, or a literary piece does not seem to matter. Mental spaces can be modified over the course of discourse and thought, and are interconnected to one another.

Taking all this into account, they can be used to showcase the mapping of thought and language (Fauconnier & Turner 2002; Dancygier 2006; Brandt & Brandt 2005.a, 2005.b; Brandt 2013). These small mental spaces could be linked together as parts of long-term frameworks of specific knowledge (known as *frames*, which will be explained further down below). To put it very briefly - all this may constitute the architecture of thought. The clustering of these frames gives rise to semantic domains, and through this: human cognition (Brandt 2013). I will not delve into this topic as of now, but rather wish to focus on a smaller but vital part of human cognition: the human ability to construct new meaning through inputs - the *blending* of mental spaces.

By projecting structures of separate mental spaces onto one another, new meanings are allowed to surface and emerge. These new meanings emerge through the creation of yet another separate mental space: the blend (Turner 1996; Fauconnier & Turner 2001, 2002; Brandt 2005; Brandt & Brandt 2005.a, 2005.b; Dancygier 2006; Brandt 2013). The blend is responsible for meaning, and is heavily dependent on context. The projection of multiple mental spaces onto one another is also known as conceptual blending, shortened to CB (Fauconnier & Turner 2002; Brandt & Brandt 2005.b; Brandt 2013) or the conceptual integration theory, shortened to CIT (Dancygier 2006; Evans 2007; Brandt 2013).

The interactions between mental spaces (as well as the subsequent birth of a blend) can be shown in network models, as shown in **Figure 1: The Buddhist Monk** down below. The circles represent separate mental spaces, while points within the circles represent entities. Lines represent connections between the entities within different mental spaces.

The separate mental spaces that provide the basis for the mental space models are called Input spaces. They contain selective information (Turner 1996; Fauconnier & Turner 2002; Dancygier 2006). By connecting them through cross-space mapping, they are able to generate a Generic space: another mental space wherein the information provided by the Input spaces gets connected to one another. Within the Generic space, the information of the Input spaces show their shared commonalities: in which regards they may be similar to one another (Turner 1996; Fauconnier & Turner 2002).

The Input spaces project onto the Blended space, which often is simply called 'the blend'. The blend shows an emerging structure that is not found within the Input spaces themselves, and through running a blend, meaning emerges. Anything that is projected into the blend derives from counterparts within the Input spaces, although all this occurs subconsciously, usually within a flash of recognition (Turner 1996; Fauconnier & Turner 2002).

Figure 1: The Buddhist Monk is a network that depicts the (solving of the) riddle *The Buddhist Monk* from Koestler (1964, via Fauconnier & Turner: 39). The riddle goes as follows:

"A Buddhist Monk begins at dawn one day walking up a mountain, reaches the top at sunset, meditates at the top for several days until one dawn when he begins to walk back to the foot of the mountain, which he reaches at sunset. Make no assumptions about his starting or stopping or about his pace during the trips. Riddle: Is there a place on the path that the monk occupies at the same hours of the day on the two separate journeys?"

(From: Koestler 1964, via Fauconnier & Turner: 39)

In order to solve the riddle, one must imagine that the monk takes a stroll upwards and a stroll downwards at the same time. At some point, he manages to meet himself somewhere along the road - this place of meeting compels the answer to the riddle. Of course, this is an impossible scenario in real life (as one cannot meet himself, and neither can one walk two paths at the same time), but in the mind, it is easily envisionable.

In **Figure 1: The Buddhist Monk**, Input space 1 contains the monk's journey upwards, Input space 2 contains the monk's journey downwards. The Generic space shows the features the Input spaces share (the presence of the monk, the mountain, and a journey), and the Blend that combines all given information into a probable whole.

Figure 1: The Buddhist Monk
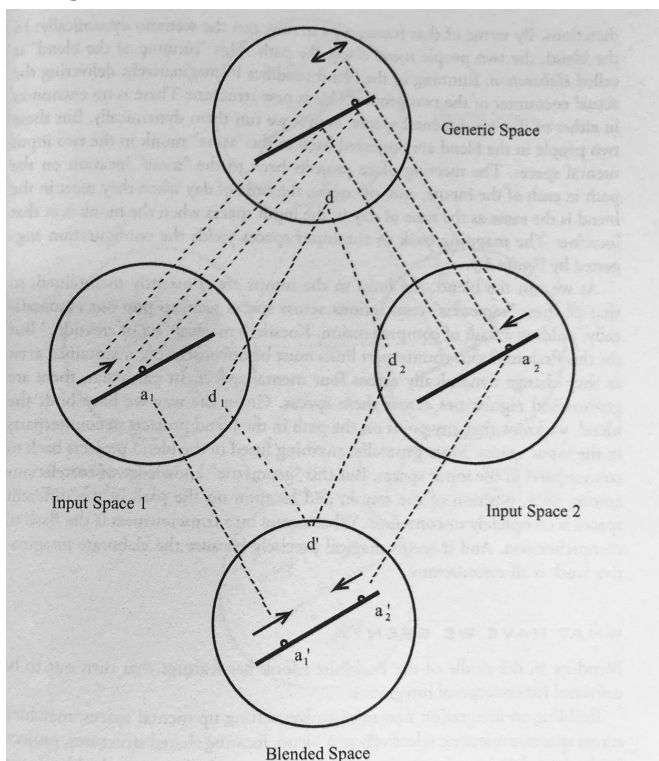
(From: Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 43)

Figure 1: The Buddhist Monk shows that in the mind, new possibilities - no matter how contrastive or surrealistic they may seem - are created naturally, and even are easily manipulated. New

meanings and ideas are generated with ease out of preexisting knowledge structures, language structures, and other meaningful structures, such as music (Turner 1996; Dancygier 2006). In order to suit the needs of more complex structures, the four-spaced model above (**Figure 1: The Buddhist Monk**) can, in turn, be modified to suit more elaborate structures, too.

However, this thesis focuses more on a different blending model, as designed by the semioticians Per-Aage Brandt and Line Brandt (2005.a, 2005.b; Brandt 2004, 2005; Brandt 2013). Similar to the mental space model in **Figure 1: The Buddhist Monk**, Brandt and Brandt propose yet another model to map mental space structure. They use a different model from Fauconnier and Turner (2002) in order to analyze discourse, metaphors, and literary texts and poetry. Brandt & Brandt (2005.b) propose that texts (as well as discourse) are both semiotic and linguistic wholes, consisting of several levels and layers. There is the linguistic layer, consisting of grammatical structure that carries a semantic aspect: *enunciation*, which, in short, represents the content of the utterance or line. This leads to the second layer, that of *semantic content*, which is an imaginary structure (phrased by Brandt and Brandt as 'imaginal') that truly represents the expressed meaning.

As such, Brandt & Brandt (2005.a, 2005.b) introduced a functional network model that consists of two Input spaces, a Blend, a Relevance space, a Meaning space, and a Semiotic base space. It is important to note that in this network, all mental spaces exist at the same time.

The Semiotic base space forms the very core of the network. The Semiotic base space represents the entire whole, the utterance, the meaning, and the context. Fauconnier and Turner (2002), as well as Turner's earlier work *The Literary Mind* (1996) also mentioned the existence of such a space: the starting point of which the rest of the network emerges and ties back into.

The two Input spaces in Brandt and Brandt (2005.a, 2005.b)'s model are called Presentation space and Reference space respectively. The Presentation space represents the linguistic form, while the Reference space represents the underlying meaning of the linguistic tokens. Within the subsequent Blend - also known as the Virtual space in their model - these two merge into a combination, showcasing new meaning.

The Relevance space ties into the Blend, where the meaning is made *relevant* in context. Following, the Meaning space gives rise to the actual meaning, or rather 'what is said between the lines', which ties into the Semiotic base space, which represents both the linguistic as well as the semiotic structure.

This network differs from the model proposed by Fauconnier and Turner (2002) in that it has explicit mental spaces for Relevance and Meaning, while the Generic space mentioned by Fauconnier and Turner is absent. According to Brandt & Brandt, the latter does not represent anything meaningful.

Brandt and Brandt (2005.a, 2005.b)'s model was designed in order to perfectly fit literary and poetic structures: the model is able to represent the linguistic layer of grammatical structure and enunciation, the semantic layer of content and imagery, the compositional form, and finally, the interpretative aesthetic status put in the context of a specific genre (Brandt & Brandt 2005.b).

In **Figure 2: Burning one's candle at both ends** below, the network proposed by Brandt & Brandt (2005.b) is shown. Together with **Figure 3: My candle burns at both ends**, these examples show the blending networks associated with the line *My candle burns at both ends,* taken from the poem *The First Fig* by Edna St Vincent Millay.

The poem reads as follows:

My candle burns at both ends;
It will not last the night;
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends --
It gives a lovely light!

(Via: Brandt & Brandt 2005.b: 117)

In **Figure 2: Burning one's candle at both ends**, the idiom *Burning one's candle at both ends* is analyzed as follows: although it is not possible to light and burn a candle at both ends, the idiom 'to burn one's candle at both ends' implies that a certain lifestyle is immoderate. The candle is equated with a life, while burning is equated with enjoying life (spaces (B) and (A) in the network). In the blend (the Virtual space), these notions come together and form the idiom itself. As such, the blend gives rise to the meaning of the idiom: burning a candle at both ends implies that life runs out faster when spend immoderately. Through the Relevance space ((C)), additional meaning to the idiom is added: sparing a candle, or living life moderately, would spare the amount of lifetime still left - as such, more meaning is added to the Meaning space, and the phrase becomes a reprimanding, reprehensible sentence: don't burn your candle at both ends, don't live life immoderately (Brandt & Brandt 2005.b).

As mentioned above, the entire network itself is called into existence immediately at the invocation of 'burning one's candle at both ends'. The separate mental spaces do not occur one after the other, but the network emerges as a whole, entirely. (Fauconnier & Turner 2002).

**Figure 2: Burning one's candle at both ends**
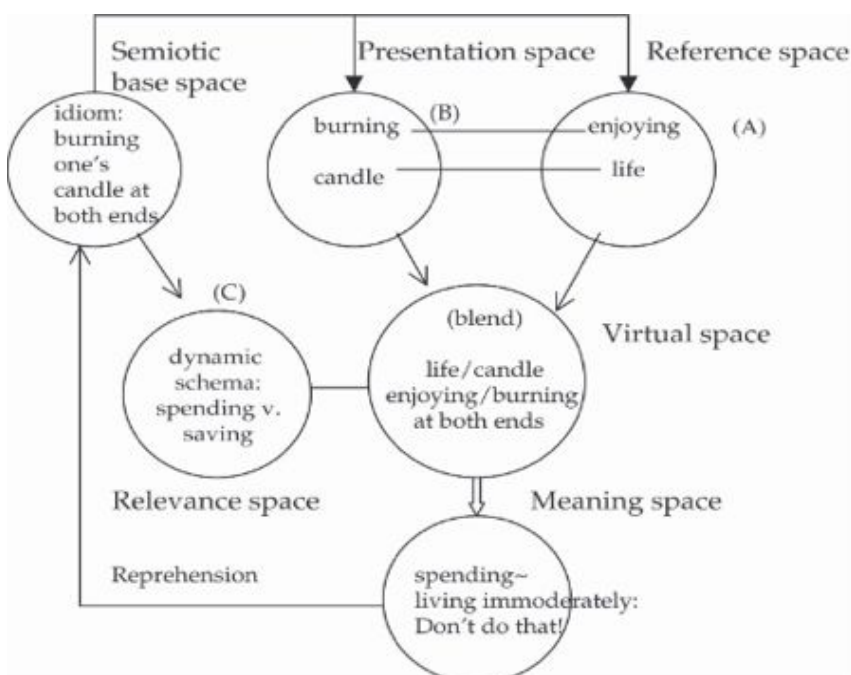
(From: Brandt & Brandt 2005.b: 119)

In **Figure 3: My candle burns at both ends**, the idiom is incorporated in a poem and given a different context rather than the more general one given above. Due to the use of the first person pronoun *My*, the idiom is personalized. The sentence implies that a certain individual (the person referenced by *My*, the narrator of the poem itself) is spending their life immoderately.

The meaning of the general idiom is invoked immediately, but gets an additional layer in the poem: although the candle burns faster, it also burns brighter, which is accentuated by the final sentence of the poem *It gives a lovely light!*: the narrator enjoys life as much as is possible, and does not care whether this eats away at their lifetime. The following sentences include emotional expressions *ah* and *oh*, as well as the use of the word *lovely*. All this serves to invokes a sense of joy at the sight of the candle's bright light - or rather, at further interpretation, the life that is being spend.

As such, the poem gets interpreted not as a reprehension of an immoderate lifestyle, but rather becomes an existential statement: the narrator's passion overrules moderation. The known idiom gets recontextualized - it gets a different *relevance* (Relevance space (C)), leading to a different interpretation. Through this, it gains a new meaning in context (Meaning space). Brandt & Brandt (2005.b) call this *the recycling of an idiom*, a concept which is important to this thesis. In poetics, it is also known as the reprocessing principle: the recontextualization and meaning of well-known phrases and idioms, usually in aesthetic manners.

Figure 3: My candle burns at both ends
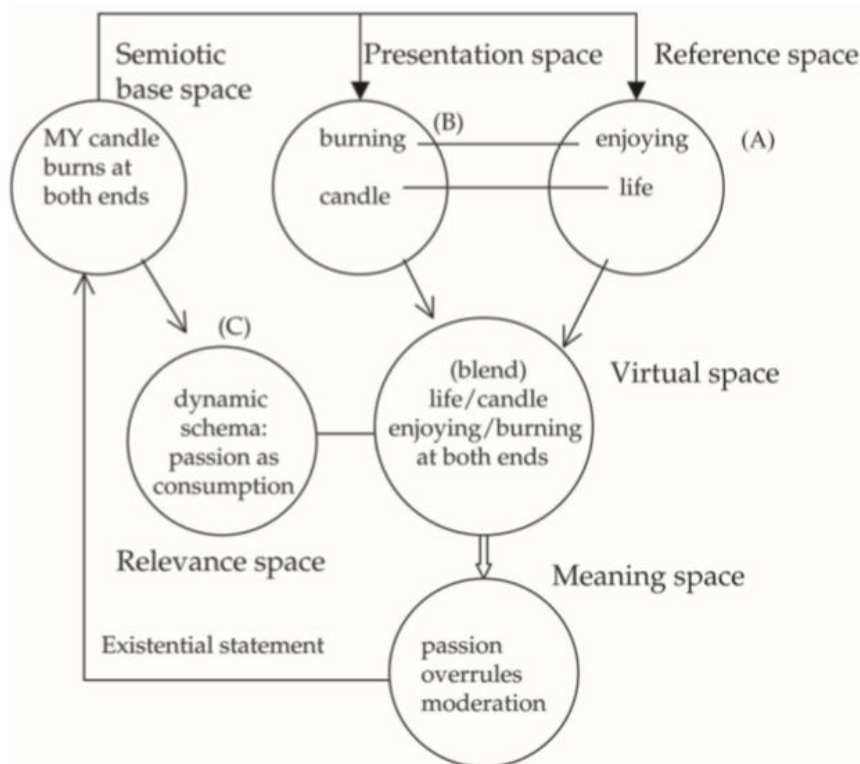
(From: Brandt & Brandt 2005.b: 120)

2.2 The Bommodel

As shown above in *2.1 Mental spaces and conceptual blending*, using semiotic networks to interpret narratives and poetics can be highly useful in literary analyses indeed. Without mentioning the semioticians in her work (2012), Dancygier, as well as Ziem (2014) seem to agree with Brandt and Brandt on this matter. Dancygier (2006, 2012) also mentions that entire narratives in general are, in fact, linguistic constructions of form and meaning alike.

Linguistic structure gives form to narratives, encapsulating their intended meaning in language. As such, narratives too could be analyzed through the perspective of applied semiotics. Taking this into account, the blending theory could become a useful tool[2] befitting of analyzing narratives. Like the network model by Brandt & Brandt (2005.a, 2005.b) - proposed for poetical structures and metaphorical sentences - Dancygier (2012) argues that blending networks are not only applicable to analyses on sentence level, but also to longer textual structures, such as novels. She mentions the importance of *frames* in this matter. I view *frames* as key to the interpretation of idioms as well.

Frames are long-term networks of specific knowledge, which consist of mental spaces. They are complex networks of semantic associations that are called upon unconsciously as soon as an utterance is made. They are usually anchored to specific lexical items or set phrases, such as idioms. The mental spaces of frames cease to exist as soon as they are no longer contextually relevant (e.g. when discourse stops, or a topic gets switched), and they only emerge as part of the same structure when they are relevant to the context. A complete frame of knowledge (mental spaces) may appear even when only a single aspect of such a frame is mentioned (Fauconnier & Turner 2002; Dancygier 2012; Ziem 2014).

Due to their mental space-like nature of existence, frames too can be used as inputs in integration networks and function just the same as singular mental spaces. As such, they can also produce frame-based blends. Therefore, a particularly large frame (or network) of knowledge may also consist of frame inputs and produce of all relevant knowledge presented by this network (Dancygier 2012; Ziem 2014). In a sense, frames seem to be nothing but elaborate, powerful mental space networks that are connected through associations, or rather: entrenched mental spaces. Alexander Ziem (2014) stresses the interconnected, embedded nature of frames.

I consider the network model proposed by Brandt & Brandt (2005.a, 2005.b) perfectly suitable for the analysis of frames. Although they never explicitly mentioned the term 'frame' themselves, Per-Aage Brandt (2005) initially created a model that introduces the concept of 'nested networks': Brandt and Brandt's single network (shown in **Figure 2: Burning one's candle at both ends** and **Figure 3: My candle burns at both ends** above) is able to tie into other networks of similar types in order to further construct deeper meaning - exactly as Dancygier mentions in her *The Language of Stories* (2012). Brandt's model (Brandt 2005) is shown in **Figure 4: A nested network**. In a nested network, the Meaning space of network I is directly tied to the Reference space in network II: the meaning of network I is an input of network II.

Furthermore, the Relevance spaces of both networks are connected, showcasing that they are heavily context-reliant. Through these connections between both networks, an even more elaborate model can get constructed. I would dare claim that, through Brandt's nested networks, it may actually become possible to construct the architecture behind complex concepts that carry many connotations

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[2] See section *2.3 Semiotics, semiosis, and mental spaces - an alternative approach* for a more elaborate explanation as to why cognitive linguistic models are 'tools' that can be used to capture meaning.

and associations. Or rather: to visually construct the lay-out of a frame, as proposed by Dancygier (2012) and Ziem (2014).

Figure 4: A nested network
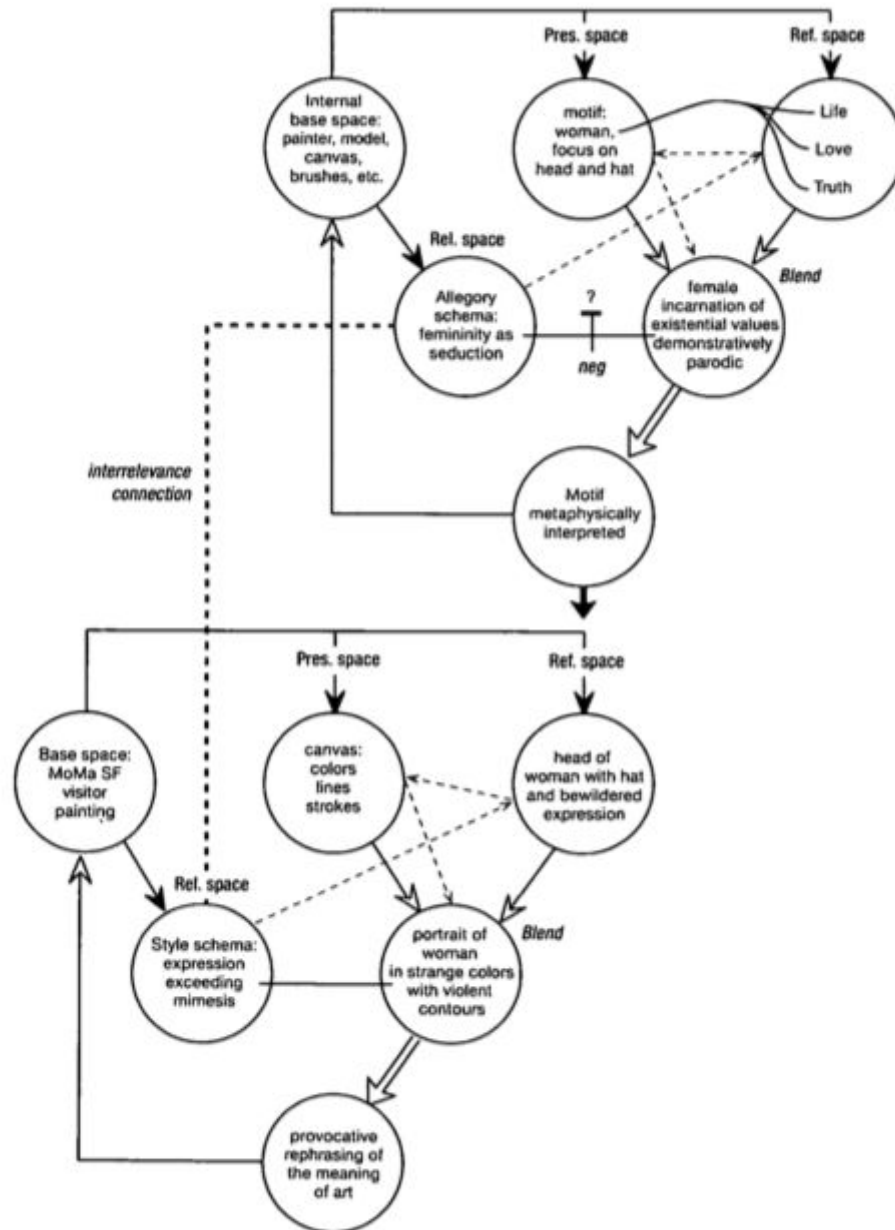
Fig. 3. Nested network.

(From Brandt 2005: 1592)

Mark Turner (1996) mentions that idioms are constructed parables that are generally well-known amongst native speakers of a language. Idioms and their meanings are not easily accessible to non-native speakers.Those yet unfamiliar with an idiom often need to ask for clarification of its meaning, as the meaning of an idiom heavily relies on native knowledge of a language, culture, and context. To put it in simpler terms: idioms consist of frames. Knowledge of idioms is dependent on

having had prior experience with said idioms (and their meanings both), just like frames also are taught and learnt through recurrent experience (Ziem 2014). As such, in this thesis, I claim that constructing the meaning of an idiom implies access to frames of native knowledge. The quotes from the Bommel saga in chapter *3. An analysis of ten quotes from the Bommel saga* showcase the necessity of access to native frames of knowledge in order to understand Toonder's complex blends.

Rather than recycling idioms as per Brandt and Brandt (2005.a), Marten Toonder often mixes, matches, and reformulates several idioms all at once in order to create new meaning. I would like to call these *blending idioms*: projecting the meaning of two or more idioms onto a blend in order for new meaning to emerge. (Or rather: two or more frames projecting their meaning onto a blend, in order to create - sometimes surprising - new meanings).

As the network models by Brandt and Brandt (2005.a, 2005.b; Brandt 2005) are highly useful for analyzing recycled idioms, I decided to design a nested network model of my own, one that is meant to not only highlight the intricate workings of Toonder's language use, blending, and creativity, but also as an attempt to visualize the framed architecture of blended Dutch idioms. In **Figure 5: The Bommodel** my model is showcased in its most basic form.

It consists of three connected networks altogether: two of which represent separate idioms ('Idiom I' and 'Idiom II' in **Figure 5: The Bommodel**) , and one of which actually blends the both of them ('Actual Utterance' in **Figure 5: The Bommodel**). The network of the Actual Utterance is representative of the actual utterance, while the two nested networks are never actually mentioned in full. They exist below the surface level of thought, and are structures of knowledge that are unconsciously drawn upon. Without proper knowledge of the meaning of both concealed networks - often consisting of native knowledge of a language - it becomes near-impossible to understand the meaning of the Actual Utterance.

As it is connected to two nested networks, the Actual Utterance contains not just one but rather two or more separate Reference spaces. In this regard, the Bommodel seems not unlike the model designed by Van Engelenhoven (2019.a), which is used for the analysis of Malay pantun, which also contains at least two Reference spaces.

Like Brandt and Brandt's nested network model, the Bommodel connects through the Meaning and Reference spaces, as well as the Relevance spaces. The Meaning spaces of Idiom I and Idiom II are directly connected to the Reference spaces of the Actual Utterance. As such, the information provided by the Reference spaces of the Actual Utterance draws upon knowledge derived from the two nested networks. In theory, the amount of Reference spaces connected to Meaning spaces could be endless, and for the sake of clarity, I propose that the Bommodel only shows a limited amount of connections at the time.

The Relevance spaces of all networks also are connected: contextually relevant information gets projected onto the Actual Utterance. Although neither of the Idiom I and Idiom II networks are actually present in the actual utterance itself, information from both networks can be drawn upon.

Due to the nature of this complex nested network model, I claim that the Bommodel is able to represent a frame, which would be in accordance with Dancygier's observations (2012).

Figure 5: The Bommodel
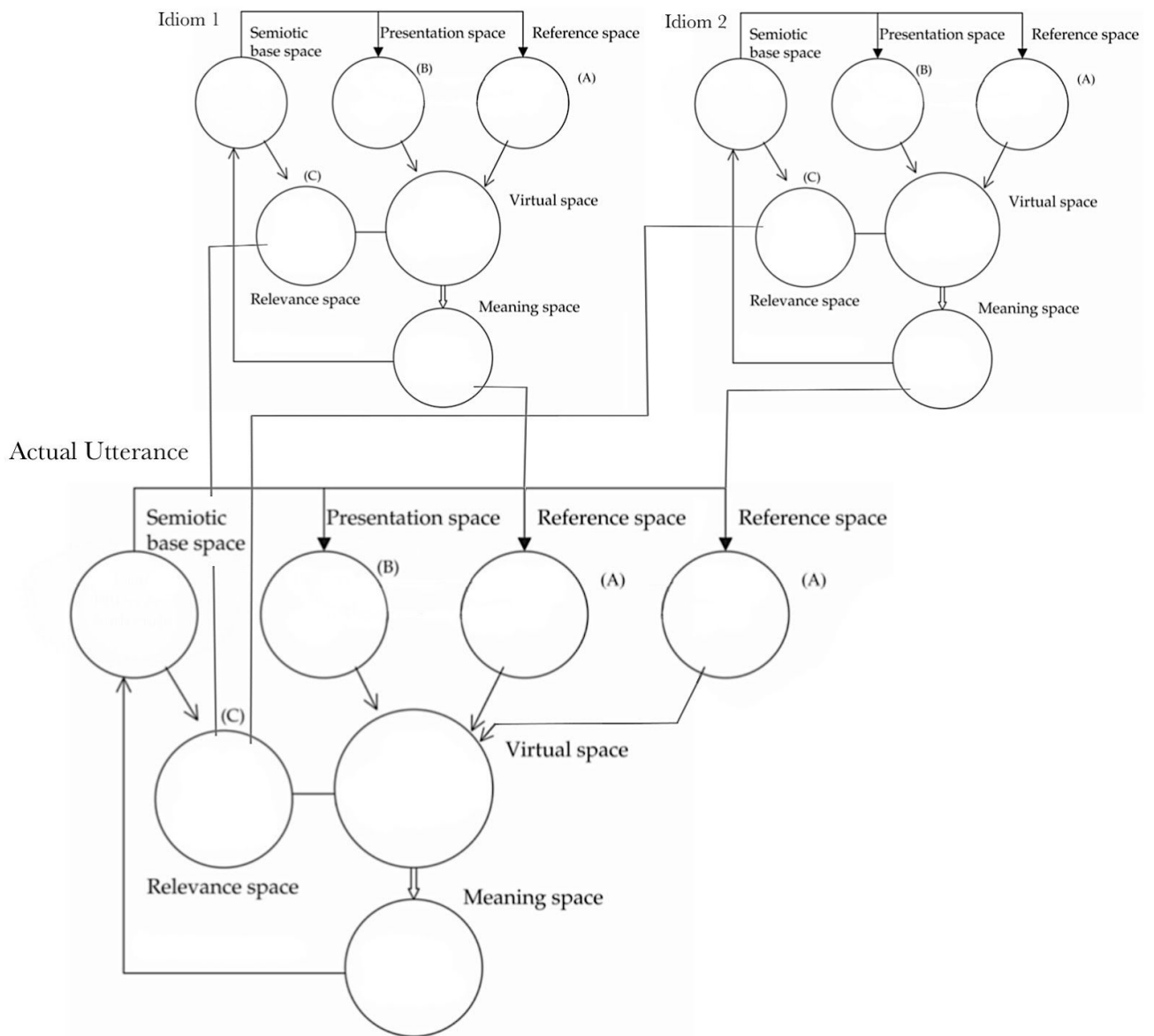
The name of this type of network, *Bommodel*, is a purposeful pun in Dutch. It pays homage to Toonder's tendency to create new and entertaining compounds, amongst them the iconic title *Een Bommelding*, which roughly translates to both 'a bomb threat' as well as 'a Bommel-thing'.

Just like the title of this particular story, the name of the new blending model is a compound - or should I say blend? - consisting of the surname *Bommel* (pronounced as either [bɔməl] or [bɔmɔl] in Dutch) and the term *model* (pronounced as [mɔdəl] for the purposes of this thesis). The name 'Bommel' refers to Toonder's deuteragonist lord Bommel, while 'model' obviously refers to the cognitive model itself.

The Bommodel shows the emergent structure of both idioms as well as blended idioms, allowing for them to become entrenched into Toonder's elaborate blend. As mentioned before, I will put this network to use in chapter *3. An analysis of ten quotes from the Bommel saga.*

2.3 Semiotics, semiosis, and mental spaces - an alternative approach

Both the subject of this thesis as well as the term 'semiotic network' (as used in the above two sections) implies the importance of semiotics in cognitive linguistic research. As such, I decided to both look into cognitive linguistics as well as semiotics in order to get a completer overview of my subject. I found that linguistic theory and semiotic theory are perfectly compatible, and that the application of semiotic theory leads to deeper insights into understanding linguistics - especially on the matter of metaphorical language use.

Semiotics is the study of meaningful systems[3] (to put it in Fauconnier and Turner-like terms), amongst which any language belongs. Semiotic research may be the key to fully understanding as well as ground mental space theory, as through the study of semiotics it becomes possible to define what mental spaces are made of. It also provides a less rigid perspective on 'frames' as described above.

In this section, I briefly attempt to tie the conceptual blending theory to a couple of semiotic theories in order to ground the concept of 'mental spaces' and present that mental space networks, amongst them the Bommodel, can be used as yet another tool to visualize the architecture of thought (which, if one would follow semiotics, turns out to be more of a nebula-like entity than an architectural structure). I also propose a conceptual change to the mental space theory by Fauconnier and Turner (2002), based on my findings in this thesis, where the selection of subconscious information is key to blending, rather than the compression of information.

Let us begin with defining what may constitute a cognitive linguistic 'mental space': sememes. Sememes are semantic units consisting of combinations of semes: the smallest semantic units to still carry distinctive information (Greimas 1966, via Nöth 1990; Fortuin & Geerdink-Verkoren 2019). Much like a phoneme in linguistics is an assortment of distinctive features that are either present or absent, a sememe is an assortment of semes (Eco 1979; Nöth 1990; Fortuin & Geerdink-Verkoren 2019; Van Engelenhoven 2019.b). The totality of conceptual categories of the human mind consists of semes in relation to one another. Although sememes may convey meaning in many types of different meaningful systems such as music, mathematics, art, or language (Greimas 1966, via Nöth 1990), this thesis primarily focuses on a linguistic approach. As such, I focus on lexical sememes first and foremost, and make use of the approach that Van Engelenhoven proposes in his manuscript (2019.b).

Lexical sememes consist of semes, which are distinguishable into two types: denotational semes and connotational semes (Van Engelenhoven 2019.b). Traditional semantics already made a similar distinction between denotational and connotational meaning, with denotational meaning referring to primary meaning, and connotational meaning referring to countless possibilities of supplementary meanings (Eco 1979; Nöth 1990). Eco himself (1979: 55-56) describes denotation as 'a semantic property that is a property of its possible referents', and connotation as 'a semantic property that is not necessarily corresponding to a culturally recognized property of the possible referent'. He specifically notes that denotation implies the (unchanging) content of an expression, while connotation implies the content of a 'sign-function' - a variable message that is dependable on context and circumstance. Van Engelenhoven (2019.b) makes a similar distinction within his denotational and connotational semes. Denotational semes are core semantic particles that can be recognized as distinctive features on a referent in the non-lingual world. They are unchanging and permanent particles. Connotational semes, on the other hand, are semantic particles that indicate features that are *not* recognizable on a referent in the non-lingual world (Van Engelenhoven 2019.b). In spite of the similar terminology, Van

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[3] Also known as 'sign processes', 'semiosis', or 'codes' (Eco 1979).

Engelenhoven (2019.b) adds that denotational semes project extensional meaning of a word, while connotational semes add intensional meaning of a word.

As such, it must be noted that Van Engelenhoven's approach to sememes and semes differs from the approach that was proposed years prior by Greimas (1966, via Nöth 1990). Greimas also distinguished two types of semes within a single sememe: nuclear semes and contextual semes. Nuclear semes form the core of a sememe: they are context-independent and specific for a particular sememe, whereas contextual semes expresses a common denominator with other elements of an utterance, in turn showcasing the relationship of the entire sememe in opposition with the rest of the utterance.

Although the concepts of denotational semes and nuclear semes show some similarities (with either of them being the independent 'invariant' of a sememe, to use Ebeling-like terminology) nuclear sememes do not necessary refer to perceivable features in the non-lingual world. Furthermore, unlike contextual semes, connotational semes do not only refer to common denominators within an utterance either, rather referring to non-perceivable features instead - though it must be noted that both types of semes indeed are heavily context-dependent.

It is the distinction between perceivable features/non-perceivable features in the non-linguistic world that is of much importance to this thesis: it is the connotational semes that contain an individual's abstract knowledge of phenomena associated with a lexical sememe (Van Engelenhoven 2019.b). It is connotational semes that give rise to Eco's encyclopedias (1979), which I will explain down below, which in turn give rise to mental space networks as described in the above sections - or to put it in no uncertain terms: conceptual blending is possible through associations between connotational semes.

Sememes themselves may also function as semes within another sememe (Eco 1979; Van Engelenhoven 2019.b). Following this logic, embedded sememes are automatically connotational, as they cannot be features that are perceivable in the non-lingual world only. By now, it should be clear that - just like 'mental spaces' are embedded into 'frames' that can go on endlessly - sememes exist in opposition to one another. Greimas (1966, via Nöth 1990) as well as Eco (1979) and Fortuin and Geerdink-Verkoren (2019) note the same. This would imply that the relationships between connotational semes (not denotational semes, as they project onto perceivable features and form the invariant of a sememe) are highly conventionalized. Eco (1979: 112-114) refers to the complete and flexible, possibly infinite collection of sememes within the human mind as 'encyclopedia'. An encyclopedia[4] is created through individual and repeated experiences in the non-linguistic world. As such, each person has a unique encyclopedia of their own, though it may find resemblances with those of others.

To put it in Econian terms, sememes (which may combine in lexemes) are meta-semiotic constructs. They exist in a near-infinite state of semiosis: each sememe, even seme, can lead to another endless linkage of more sememes. Due to the sheer complexity and near-infinite nature of semiosis on this level, Eco (1979) mentions it is an impossible task to capture such a structure within any form of visualization[5]. Compositional models can be used as hypotheses that, in turn, can be used

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[4] According to Eco (1979: 112-129), encyclopedias are formless and not at all structured; they are nebulaic entities. For a more elaborate explanation of encyclopedia, I recommend reading Eco (1979) *A Theory of Semiotics*, as this thesis will focus on the function of an encyclopedia first and foremost, rather than its components.

[5] A 'frame' as proposed by Ziem (2014) appears to be nothing more than a structured, partial representation of Eco's nebulaic, formless encyclopedia. In this thesis, frames will be treated as such.

to control or visualize the process of sememes clustering together, but they can never fully capture the ever-changing transitional state of semiosis.

Even so, attempts to visually capture it on paper have been made, most notably Quillian's model (Quillian & Minsky (ed.) 1968, via Eco 1979:123), and cognitive blending models (Fauconnier & Turner 2001, 2002; Brandt & Brandt 2005.a.b.). The Bommodel as proposed in this thesis is yet another attempt to capture the intricate but innately formless constructions of thought. Although Fauconnier and Turner (2001, 2002; Turner 2013) did not intend for their blending model to be a model of linguistic creativity only, it very much is attuned to visualizing the non-lingual world. It deals with texts, sentences, and words - it innately deals with lexemes, which on a semiotic level, consist of sememes and semes. Tying their theory to the semiotic theories of Eco's and Van Engelenhoven's, it is through connotational semes that blending becomes possible: connotational semes from different concepts come together and go through new states of semiosis together.

In case it needs to be clarified, I do *not* claim mental spaces are the same as sememes or semes. Semes and sememes are small semiotic units, whereas mental spaces defined as larger packets of information, or to put it in different words: larger clusters of semiotic units. These larger packets of semiotic units are not perceivable in the non-lingual world - and as such, I would dare claim that they are, in essence, clusters of connotational semes that link and blend together into myriads of combinations, whichever blends are made possible by convention. Convention creates order from entropy.

Convention is subconsciously governed by constraining principles and governing rules, which are created through repeated experiences of an individual, in order to guide the process of semiosis (Eco 1979, 1994; Ziem 2014). Constraining principles and governing rules do not predict which connotational semes will cluster together, but rather, they have a constitutive function: they limit clustering possibilities, but allow for creativity and innovation within certain subconscious boundaries. The principles that guide limitations of conventions are commonly referred to as *constitutive principles* in cognitive linguistics (Fauconnier & Turner 2001, 2002; Evans 2007), while the guiding rules within the encyclopedia are called *governing principles*[6]. The latter consists of strategies that allow the creation of emergent structure, which in turn may lead to conventionalized structures. The more these structures are repeated, the more ingrained they become. Conventionalized clusters of sememes that are present within the individual encyclopedia of individuals in groups become part of a group's *culture*. As such, it is possible to speak of 'cultural clusters' if the conventional clustering of sememes is present within groups of people (Eco 1979).

Idioms are considered such cultural clusters (Eco 1994). Idioms are a type of linguistic metaphor - metaphors are chains of unlimited semiosis: each term can be explained by another term. They can be analyzed on a sentential level (the level on which I will focus on in chapter *3. An analysis of ten quotes from the Bommel saga*) but on an even closer level they consist of a contiguity of sememes - or to delve even deeper: a contiguity of connotational semes.

Figure 6: Meandertale below shows a map of associations of the term 'meandertale', a pun from James Joyce's work *Finnegan's Wake*. A pun also is a type of linguistic metaphor. Eco (1994) produced the figure in order to show how semantic associations are generated in opposition to one another. In **Figure 6: Meandertale**, it is through phonetic association first and foremost ('meandertale' → 'neanderthal', 'meander', 'tal' (German term for 'valley'), 'tale') that specific semantic associations are generated (e.g. 'neanderthal' → 'origins', 'savage', 'archetype'). These semantic associations generate more associations in turn. Eco stresses that his figure is nothing but a

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[6] I consider 'governing principles' to be a limited term. Sememes are not governed by anything. The only thing that shapes structure is convention itself.

limited representation, and that this map could be infinite, though the figure does make for an accessible visual representation of clustering lexemes. As such, **Figure 6: Meandertale** constitutes a map of connected phonetic and semantic associations both. When looking at the figure, note that some lexemes are positioned closer to some than to others, and that some are linked to more lexemes than to others. The visual links in **Figure 6: Meandertale** are purely representative of the connotations shared between sememes.

Figure 6: Meandertale

To put it in cognitive linguistic terminology: 'meandertale' is a blend of the embedded cognitive networks of 'neanderthal', 'meander', 'tal', and 'tale' respectively. Although none of the associations in **Figure 6: Meandertale** are explicitly mentioned by the lexeme 'meandertale', they are its connotations. As such, the collection of these connotations forms the pun's elaborate meaning. Unlike embedded cognitive networks a la Brandt (2005) or my own Bommodel, Eco's meandering model does not imply there is a surface level and an underlying structure to the pun. Instead, it implies that all associations exist at once in the pun.

A figure like **Figure 6: Meandertale** is not a functional model when it comes to making an analysis of a blend: it is too aberrant to work with. The figure has no rules or conventions that allow for systematic research on blending - notably, it was not meant to be a research model (for that reason, Eco did not even name the model in **Figure 6: Meandertale**). It simply showcases that Eco (1979) was right on the fact that an encyclopedia is tough to visualize. Eco (1979, 1994; Nöth 1990) advocates instead that semioticians should not attempt to create ultimate models for universal semiotic structures, but rather develop methodological structures to help analyze the complex workings of thought. These methodological structures - Quillian's Model, the cognitive blending model, the Bommodel - should ultimately be tools used in research, but never be taken as full representatives of the complexity that is the reality of thought. As linguist, I currently figured that Brandt's embedded network (2005) is the most accessible given form of conventional cognitive models due to reasons described above in section *2.2 The Bommodel*.

As stated in the above couple of paragraphs, **Figure 6: Meandertale** shows that a pun - a metaphor! - is a close-knit construction of semantic units (Eco 1994; Fortuin & Geerdink-Verkoren 2019; Van Engelenhoven 2019.b). These semantic units are all present within the encyclopedia of an individual (Eco 1979). When a linguistic notion[7] activates them, the units that are most relevant are clustered together to create an emergent structure. This is a subconscious process that I decided to term 'selection'. The process of selection governs which sememes cluster together and allow for a blend to emerge. Sememes that are not relevant in order to understand said linguistic cue do not cluster together and remain as much as dormant within the encyclopedia. In turn, selection is regulated by context and circumstances in the non-linguistic world and cultural conventions[8] within the encyclopedia itself.

Now, if we define 'mental spaces' as 'large clusters of semiotic units', the specific clustering process of sememes as 'selection' (from an encyclopedia), and the subsequent meaning that emerges through semiosis as 'blend', then the process of close-knitting sememes becomes 'compression' in cognitive linguistic terminology. So far, I have briefly shown some functional links between the semiotic approach and the cognitive linguistic approach to meaning-making processes, and showcased that a semiotic perspective on cognitive linguistic research can only add to the research on cognitive blending, and that it helps us stay aware of the limitations of our line of work.

As such, this would be the point I would like to make an alteration to the cognitive linguistic approach by Fauconnier and Turner (2001, 2002; Fauconnier 2005; Turner 2006) in particular, based on the semiotic theories I described above. I propose that their theory on 'compression' is yet to be explored to its full potential, and that a semiotic approach to linguistics can help understand the subconscious process of blending in an interdisciplinary and more complete manner. In order to do so I will first give Fauconnier and Turner's (2002) definition of compression. Afterwards, I will give a reanalysis of their example titled *The Mindful Pronghorn* in order to both show the functionality of my alternate approach as well as the functionality of the Bommodel in this branch of research.

For the moment, I make a brief return to a solely cognitive linguistic approach. According to Fauconnier and Turner (2001, 2002; Fauconnier 2005; Turner 2006, 2013), a vital element to the blending of mental spaces is *compression*. Vyvyan Evans (2007:30) gives the definition of the following process:

> *"(...) Compression constitutes the process whereby an **outer-space relation** holding between **counterparts** in distinct **input spaces** is 'shortened' so as to 'tighten' the connection between counterparts. This results in **emergent structure**, an **inner-space relation** in the **blended space**."*

Or rather: compression is the selective projection of vital relations onto separate but linked mental spaces. (Fauconnier & Turner 2001, 2002; Fauconnier 2005; Turner 2006).

Vital relations are conceptual relations that continuously reoccur in blending through compression. They are links across mental spaces: links between the Inputs, which in turn may become links compressed within the blend, while still projecting back onto their original mental spaces. Fauconnier and Turner (2002) identified the following 16 vital relations in particular: Change, Identity, Time, Space, Cause-Effect, Part-Whole, Representation, Role, Analogy, Disanalogy, Property, Similarity, Category, Intentionality, and Uniqueness.

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[7] or any other semiotic notion, for example: a sound or tone, a visual cue, a smell, a piece of music, a piece of art.

[8] conventions governed by constraining principles and governing principles, of course.

These vital relations exist across mental spaces, or rather, as outer-space relations. As mentioned above, these vital relations can be compressed into the blended space and become inner-space relations. In **Figure 7: General scheme for the compression of an outer-space relation to an inner-space relation**, a visual representation is given. The emboldened black line represents a vital relation. Through compression, the inter-space relationship between vital relations 'tightens' - through which blending becomes possible.

Figure 7: General scheme for the compression of an outer-space relation to an inner-space relation
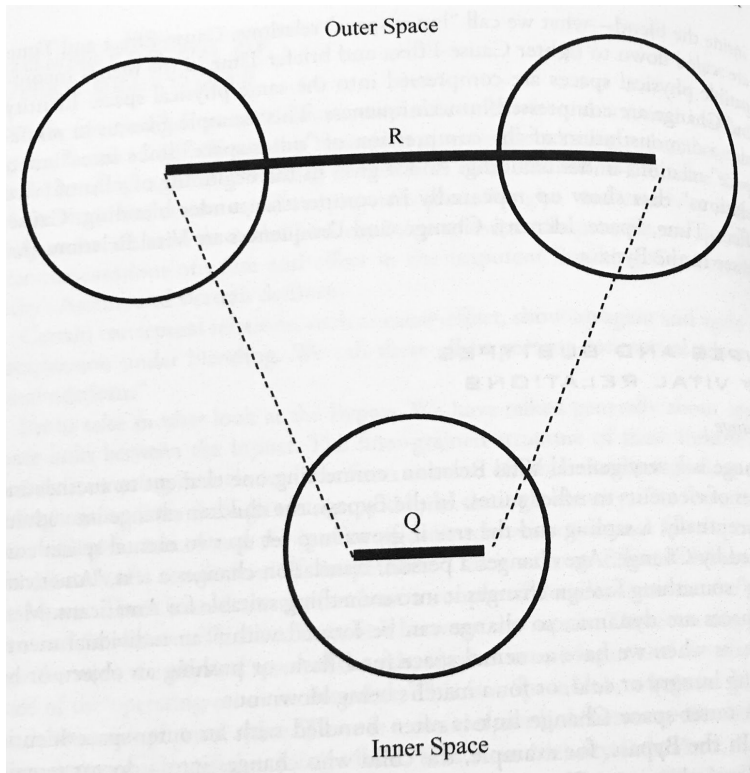
(From: Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 94)

Compression within mental spaces networks all have one goal according to Fauconnier and Turner (2002), which is 'achieving the human scale in a single mental space (the blend)'. What is meant by this exactly remains unclear, however. Mark Turner (1996, 2002, 2013, 2016) implies through vivid, imaginative examples (such as The Mindful Pronghorn, as will be explained down below) that 'the human scale' is roughly 'something that human beings can comprehend', or 'something relatable on a human level'. In a lecture in 2013, followed by an article in 2016, Turner explained 'the human scale' a little further. Compression to human scale means 'to fit within the human scale of thought; the working memory'. When compressing a thought or concept to 'the human scale', one takes the similarities between concepts, takes the differences, and squeezes them together in a blend, where they become a newly emerged concept. Of course, this is a complex process of compression, decompression, and transformation of vital relations.

From a semiotic perspective, this can be explained in a different manner, if not a simpler manner, without any need for 'human scale'. Although the compression of information certainly is a functional process within blending, to me it seems to function slightly different from Fauconnier and Turner's

(2002) proposition. Following the theories I described above, I would rather claim that semiotic units cluster together from all throughout the encyclopedia, after which relevant sememes in contiguity (attracted through relevant properties within connotational semes) create an emergent structure through convention, sometimes in surprisingly creative manners. All relevant sememes lend their information to the subsequent 'blended mental space' as connotations. This is where compression takes place: widespread, seemingly aberrant connotations knit together tightly (or 'get compressed') through conventions (also known as 'regulated semiosis') and create a blend: new meaning. This would imply that each blend is a highly individual phenomenon - and I claim that, indeed, it is. Each encyclopedia is unique after all, and connotations may vary per person. Even so, conventions and shared experiences (as well as shared meaningful structures) are enough to still make communication possible and highly effective as well. Due to the flexible nature of semiosis, new ways to blend semiotic units can only be added to the encyclopedia. In turn, this implies that there is no such thing as 'outside the human scale'. There only is 'within human scale': the scale of the encyclopedia of an individual.

Now, to illustrate where I deviate from Fauconnier and Turner (2002), I propose an alternative analysis of their example of *The Mindful Pronghorn*. In order to read the full example given by Fauconnier and Turner (2002), I recommend checking out Fauconnier and Turner's *The Way We Think* (2002) itself for more a more elaborate explanation. Regardless, I first give their analysis in order to demonstrate my point.

The example of The Mindful Pronghorn is based on the blending processes that take place in the following text:

"the pronghorn runs as fast as it does because it is being chased by ghosts -- the ghosts of predators past… As researchers begin to look, such ghosts appear to be ever more in evidence, with studies of other species showing that even when predators have been gone for hundreds of thousands of years, their prey may not have forgotten them" (p. C1)'

(From: New York Times 1996, via Fauconnier & Turner 2002: 115)

The pronghorn at hand is the American pronghorn gazelle, which is a fast prey animal. The pronghorn biologically adapted itself for speed in order to survive over time. Even if predators are long extinct and the prehistoric pronghorn evolved into the modern-day pronghorn, the animal still is built to reach high speed levels anyways. In the text above, the prehistoric pronghorn and the modern-day pronghorn have become the same animal, one that remembers the extinct predators from the past - the "ghosts" in the text - and thus will run at top speed no matter by whom it is chased.

There are two Input spaces that consist of a prehistoric pronghorn who has to run fast in order to flee from predators, and of a modern pronghorn who runs fast but no longer has to flee from predators. In the blend, they become one and the same individual: the mindful pronghorn who remembers their past - and thus, runs fast. Their identity (and time, and space) gets compressed into one another as their experiences, memories, and physiology melt together into a newly emerged blend.

This is not the only type of compression at play here: the Input spaces themselves also consists of compressed identities already. The Input spaces make use of a prototypical prehistoric pronghorn and a prototypical modern pronghorn respectively. The prototypical prehistoric pronghorn is a compression of all (possible) experiences, behaviors, and natures of all prehistoric pronghorns, while the prototypical modern pronghorn is a compression of all (possible) experiences, behaviors, and natures of all modern pronghorns. The two groups have become the two representative animals in the

Input spaces through compression. In the example of The Mindful Pronghorn, only necessary elements and relations between the inputs are able to emerge within the blend: in this case, a pronghorn who runs from predators and survives.

The same excerpt from the NY Times would yield a different analysis through a semiotic approach in combination with the Bommodel, as shown in **Figure 8: The Mindful Pronghorn**. The new analysis is as follows: the pronghorn is a fast-running prey animal, which adapted for speed over the course of evolutionary processes - which, in this case, assured survival of the fastest. The fastest pronghorns survived predation. The predators in question are referred to as 'ghosts', showcasing that these predators of old went extinct, even if their presence left its mark on the physiology of modern pronghorns, eloquently referred to as 'their prey may not have forgotten them'. The meaning of the excerpt of the NY Times appears to be founded on a poetic blend of the references mentioned above.

Figure 8: The Mindful Pronghorn is not even a complete model, as it does not include 'their prey may not have forgotten them' due to the limitations of putting this model to paper (a model with as many embedded networks as is needed would be unreadable). The actual model could be much larger. For a full analysis of the sentence, one could split the actual necessary model into two separate figures, but as it is not necessary, I opted not to do so. It is important to note that this example immediately shows the limitations of the Bommodel (or any other large network model, for that matter): they can only represent a small part of the actual blending process that is going on on a larger scale.

Figure 8: The Mindful Pronghorn
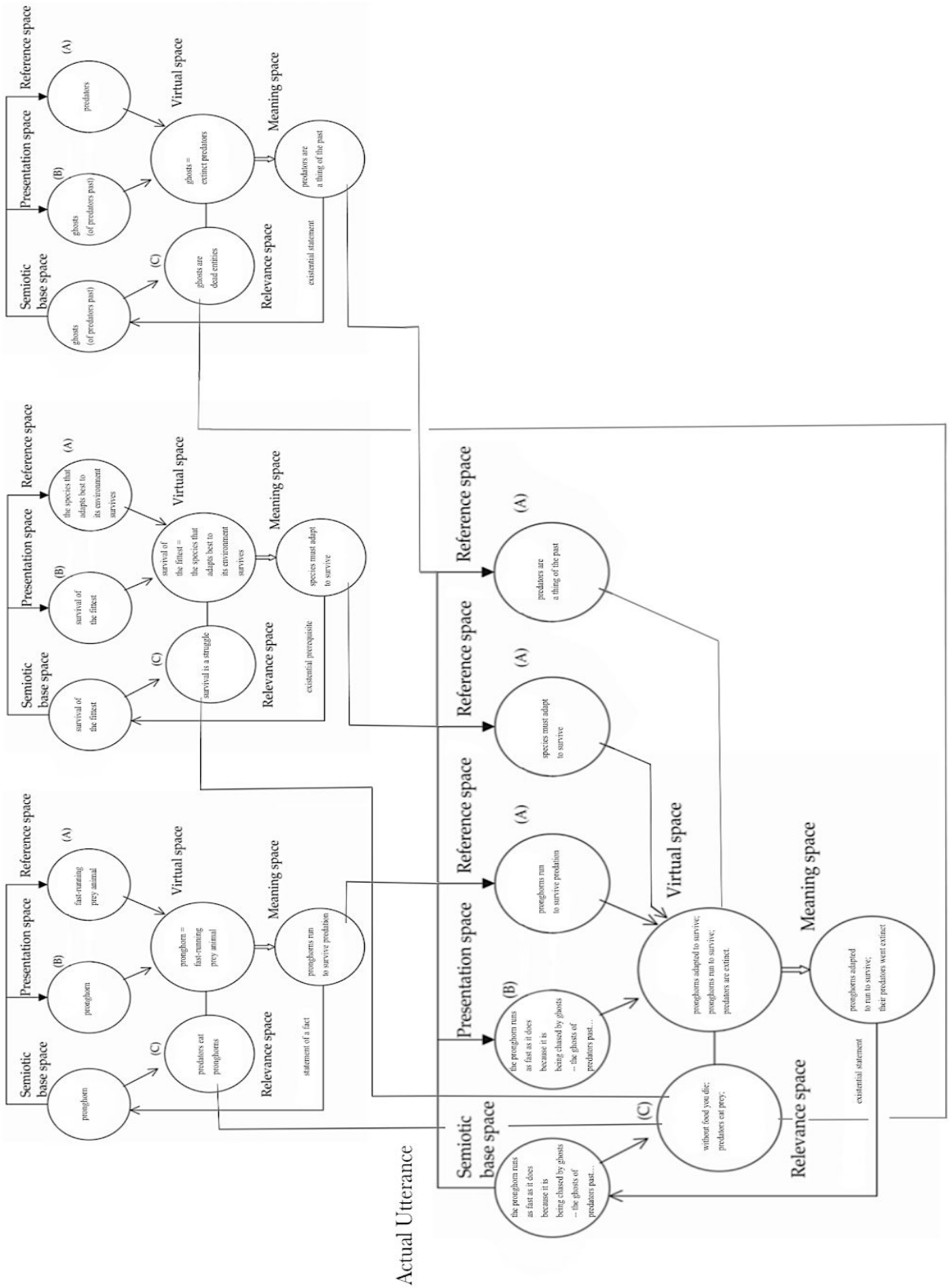
Interestingly, even Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 116) say exactly the same as well:

"In the prehistoric story, the American pronghorn barely outruns nasty predators (...). In the modern story, it easily outruns all its modern predators. In the blend, the pronghorn is being chased by nasty ancient predators, marked as "ghosts" to signal that they have no reference in the modern world. We are not confused by this felicitous blend. We do not expect to see ghosts chasing a real pronghorn; we do not think any living pronghorn remembers the prehistoric predators. Instead, we know how to connect the blend to the story of the pronghorn: Great speed was adaptive for the animal's ancestors, who faced nasty predators, and although those predators are now extinct, the physiological capacity for speed survives."

They continue, however, as follows:

"What gives us a global insight into an evolutionary truth is a massive compression of identity over species, individuals, and time."

Fauconnier and Turner (2002; Turner 2013) claim that compression takes all information associated with pronghorns into account, which indeed would be an inhuman task. As such, I would argue that this is not actually the case. All one needs to know about pronghorns is that they adapted for speed through evolution, otherwise they would not have outlived the now-extinct predators ('ghosts'). There is no army of ancient pronghorns and modern pronghorns compressing all of their imaginary experiences into a blend of a general individual mindful pronghorn. There is only the fact that the species has relied on speed for survival, and apparently continues to do so up until this day.

Although information does get compressed into the blend (knowing that a pronghorn is a prey animal that excels at running, surface knowledge of the evolution theory, knowing that 'ghosts' refers to ancient predators), but it does not appear to do so on the very level that Fauconnier and Turner ascribe to it. Whereas the analysis by Fauconnier and Turner proposes that compression takes place on the level of the pronghorn itself, I propose that compression takes place on the level of the reader instead. It is not the pronghorn that compresses its hypothetical knowledge and experiences, it is the reader that compresses their knowledge and experiences. Connotations fully depend on the vastness of the encyclopedia of the reader. Compression does not take place on a textual level but rather on the level of the individual.

Examples such as *The Mindful Pronghorn* and even *The Buddhist Monk* (mentioned above in section *2.1 Mental spaces and conceptual blending*) have been analyzed by Fauconnier and Turner (2002) as if all individuals reach the same conclusions through the same means. This could indeed be the case if mental spaces are interpreted on the level of the text itself (considering everybody would be compressing and blending the same pronghorns), but this application of the blending theory leads to lacking interpretations because blending does not take place on the level of the text, but rather on the level of the reader[9].

Not only does the level in which blending occurs (text vs reader) seem wrongly interpreted, but also the rigidness of the blending that Fauconnier and Turner (2002) propose. At scrutinization of

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[9] Brandt's *The Riddle of the Buddhist Monk Revisited - an Episode in Elementary Exemplification of Cognitive-Semantic Blending Theory* (2017) gives an excellent explanation of Fauconnier and Turner's misinterpretations on the matter of *The Buddhist Monk*, in which he also explains that Fauconnier and Turner (2002) did not take into consideration the role of 'the embodied hearer' - the interpretant of the riddle. In my thesis, I mention 'the reader' as the interpretant of the excerpt of the NY Times.

their work, Fauconnier and Turner (2002) do not seem to fully take into account the uniqueness of each human experience (the uniqueness of each individual's encyclopedia), and that blending does not always occur in exactly the same manner varying per person. Based on the semiotic approach as described above, I claim that each blend is unique to each individual, and that understanding between people - or very similar interpretations of the same semiotic entity (e.g. a text) - is only possible through shared conventions.

Taking all this into account, I would like to stress that the analyses given in *3. Analysis of ten quotes from the Bommel saga* do not count as universal interpretations. The Bommodel is severely limited due to its shape, but allows for the analysis of interpretations that are made possible through shared cultural conventions, in which the power and charm of idioms is contained.

3. Analysis of ten quotes from the Bommel saga

Down below, I selected ten quotes from the Bommel saga by Marten Toonder in order to analyze them by the use of the mental space theory. The analysis is based mainly on the network models by Brandt & Brandt (2005.a, 2005.b; Brandt 2005, 2006; Brandt 2013).

A couple of examples are analyzed as Brandt and Brandt do, before I introduce the use of the Bommodel: the nested networks of my own design which are introduced above in Chapter 2, section *2.2 The Bommodel*. In doing so, I aim to show the functionality of Brandt and Brandt's model in regards to metaphorical language. Through these analyses, I also aim to showcase the added elaboration my model adds to theirs. Through this, I aim to show the utility of frames (as proposed by Dancygier 2012 and Ziem 2014) and their attribute to the interpretation of blended idioms and metaphors. The Bommodels all vary in form, depending on the excerpts they analyze.

In this chapter, each Dutch quote from the Bommel saga is accompanied by an English translation. As English is meant to be the metalanguage in which the analysis is written but is not the language that is actually being analysed, the English of the translation bears no focus whatsoever. The translation is meant to represent the Dutch text first and foremost, and is not written in stylistically correct English. This entails that these particular English sentences may seem nonsensical of devoid of meaning to non-Dutch speaking readers[10] , even. In order to showcase this clearly, the representative English translations, directly found underneath their Dutch counterparts, are written in-between brackets: <<...>>. The Dutch version is given for those who understand Dutch and wish to scrutinize my data themselves.

Each example is accompanied by only one Bommodel: the title of each model is Dutch (in order to showcase the Dutch blended idiom), whereas the text within the Bommodel itself is in English to make the analysis more accessible to non-native speakers of Dutch. Due to the fact this thesis focuses on the meaning rather than form of Toonder's language use, as well as the fact that this thesis does not focus on conceptual (and structural) differences between Dutch and English, I forfeited the use of glosses[11].

In example (1), taken from the story *Het Griffoen-ei* ('The Griffon-egg'), lord Bommel was found washed ashore by captain Wal Rus, after being victim of an attempted murder (once again. There are two earlier attempts on his life in this particular story). Lord Bommel is unconscious while captain Wal Rus is in the process of checking up on him. He utters the following phrase:

(1) *"Hij ademt." stelde de gezagvoerder vast, terwijl hij zich over de stakker boog. "Die Blokkers is zo sterk als een beer. **En zijn pols doet het ook nog.** Maar wat houdt hij daar vast?"*

> 1. << "He's breathing." the commander established, while he bended over the poor fellow. "That Blokkers is as strong as a bear. **And his wrist still does it too. But what's he holding there?** >>

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[10] This seems to be in accordance with Eco (1979)'s claim that semiotic systems (amongst them language systems) consist of *cultural units*.

[11] Now, I do realize that it may have benefited my analysis to properly gloss the Dutch excerpts, but due to time constraints I opted not to give additional glosses regardless.

2. "He's breathing." the commander established, while he bended over the poor fellow. "That Blokkers is as strong as a bear. **And his wrist still works too. But what's he holding there?**

- Wal Rus, *Het Griffoen-ei*

In (1.1) I give the literal translation, while (1.2) is a more elaborate translation, befitting of an English understanding. The sentence states that lord Bommel's wrist still functions. In **Figure 9: *En zijn pols doet het ook nog*** the network by Brandt and Brandt (2005.a, 2005.b) gives a clear reading of the meaning of the phrase, showcasing just how making note of lord Bommel's functioning wrist indicates that he is, in fact, alive!

Figure 9: *En zijn pols doet het ook nog*
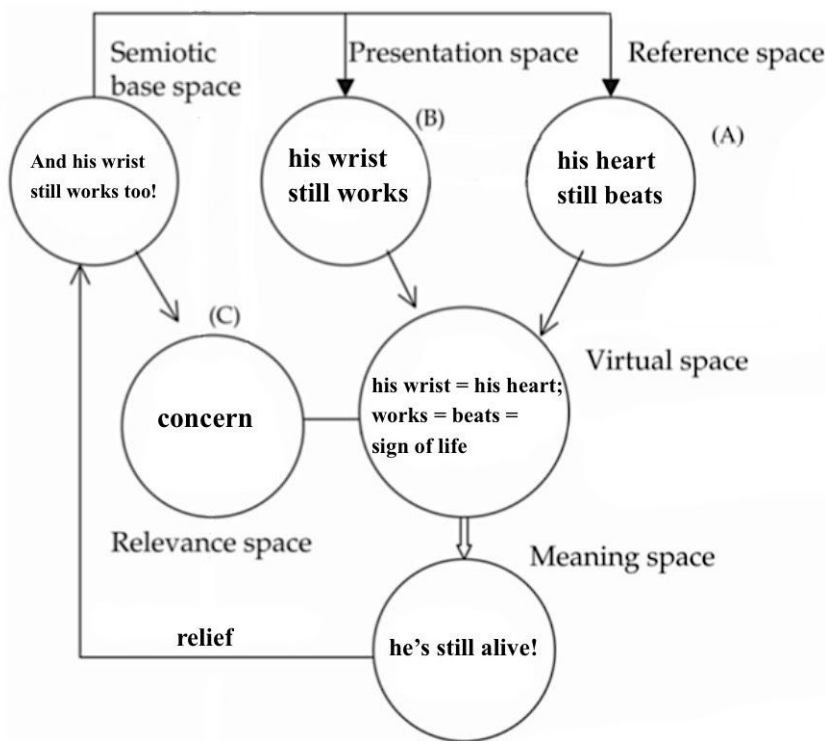
At a surface reading, one may think of the function of a wrist simply as having the ability to move the hand. However, at the wrist, it is possible to feel one's heartbeat at an elaborate touch. When someone's heart is beating, this person tends to still be alive. As such, in example (1) above, *'pols'*/'wrist' substitutes the term *'hart'*/'heart', of which its functioning implies the presence of life. As such, the sentence *'En zijn pols doet het ook nog.'*/'And his wrist still works too.' comes to mean 'And his heart is still beating too' (In Dutch: '*En zijn hart klopt ook nog.*'), implying that lord Bommel still very much is alive, even if at the current moment, he is unconscious.

The emboldened sentence in example (2) below occurs in the story *De Waarde-Ring* ('The Value-Ring' - or rather, 'Ring of Value') when Tom Poes visits lord Bommel while he is suffering

from seasonal depression. At his friend's arrival, lord Bommel announces tired happiness at seeing him, while also lamenting his own loneliness in the very same sentence.

The bolded parts in (2) are a metaphor, a phrase invoking an image: lord Bommel is in a place of loneliness, wherein lonesome days become beads, while the passage of time itself is made into a beaded necklace, a cord that is rotten through and through. In the latter part of the greeting, lord Bommel makes use of a specific comparative structure in order to express his daily lethargy: [(waarin) *de dagen zich aaneenrijgen* / (wherein) the days string themselves together] - [*als* / like] - [*de kralen van een vermolmd snoer* / the beads of a perishing cord].

(2)   *"Dag, jonge vriend," sprak hij met doffe stem. "Het is mooi van je, dat je me eens komt opzoeken in mijn eenzaamheid* **waarin de dagen zich aaneenrijgen als de kralen van een vermolmd snoer,** *als je begrijpt wat ik bedoel."*

<< "Hello, young friend," he spoke with a faint voice. "It is kind of you, that you come visit me in my loneliness **wherein the days string themselves together like the beads of a perishing cord,** if you understand what I mean." >>

- lord Bommel, *De Waarde-Ring*.

The feeling *eenzaamheid*/'loneliness' is described as a personal container that lord Bommel currently resides in and possesses, marked by the possessive pronoun *mijn*/'my'. As such, through his choice of words, lord Bommel suggests that the feeling is a location that one can wallow inside of and even visit. He then follows up with describing the act of what happens inside his loneliness: '*(waarin) de dagen zich aaneenrijgen als de kralen van een vermolmd snoer'*/'wherein the days string themselves together like the beads of a perishing cord'.

Lord Bommel makes use of the verb *aaneenrijgen*, 'to string together', which actually is a compound verb consisting of two words: *aaneen* ('together') *rijgen* ('to string'), creating a verb that carries the meaning: 'to string together loose parts into one whole'. In this metaphor, the passage of time is seen as a whole consisting of smaller packages - namely: days - much like a *snoer* ('beaded necklace') is a whole consisting of parts, namely: beads.

Interestingly, the verb *rijgen*, 'to string' has an Actor (the one doing the stringing), an instrument (the cord), and a patient (the beads), but through the addition of the reflexive element *zich* ('themselves'), it becomes a reflexive verb. Due to this slight addition, the patients are also the actors. As such, the beads string *themselves* together into a whole. This gives the beads agency over their own actions, which in itself also is a blend: beads do not actually have the agency to string themselves together. They cannot move by themselves, cannot form a whole by themselves, but through this verb, they do so anyways.

The metaphoric blending in this phrase does not end here, however. Through using this reflexive compound verb, lord Bommel expresses that he himself has no input nor agency in this dreary stringing-together of days, where they become a miserable whole. He becomes a victim to the lonesome passage of time. In the blend, the necklace of days is a lethargic symbol of victimhood.

To link the necklace of days to the location of feeling mentioned previously, the necklace of days is explicitly mentioned to exist within lord Bommel's place of loneliness. By blending the place of loneliness with the existence of a necklace of days, even more meaning emerges: lord Bommel wallows in a place where he is a victim to loneliness and the helpless progression of time, without him being able to do anything at all.

To summarize and showcase the above statements, a single network model a la Brandt and Brandt (2005.a, 2005.b) can be drawn: the model of example (1) can be found in **Figure 10: (...)** *waarin de dagen zich aaneenrijgen als de kralen van een vermolmd snoer*.

Due to the sentence being a comparison (days are compared to beads of a perishing cord), the network has two Presentation spaces that share both one Reference space as well as a blend, due to both 'days' and 'beads' encapsulating the same entity, namely, a unit of time.

Figure 10: (...) *waarin de dagen zich aaneenrijgen als de kralen van een vermolmd snoer*
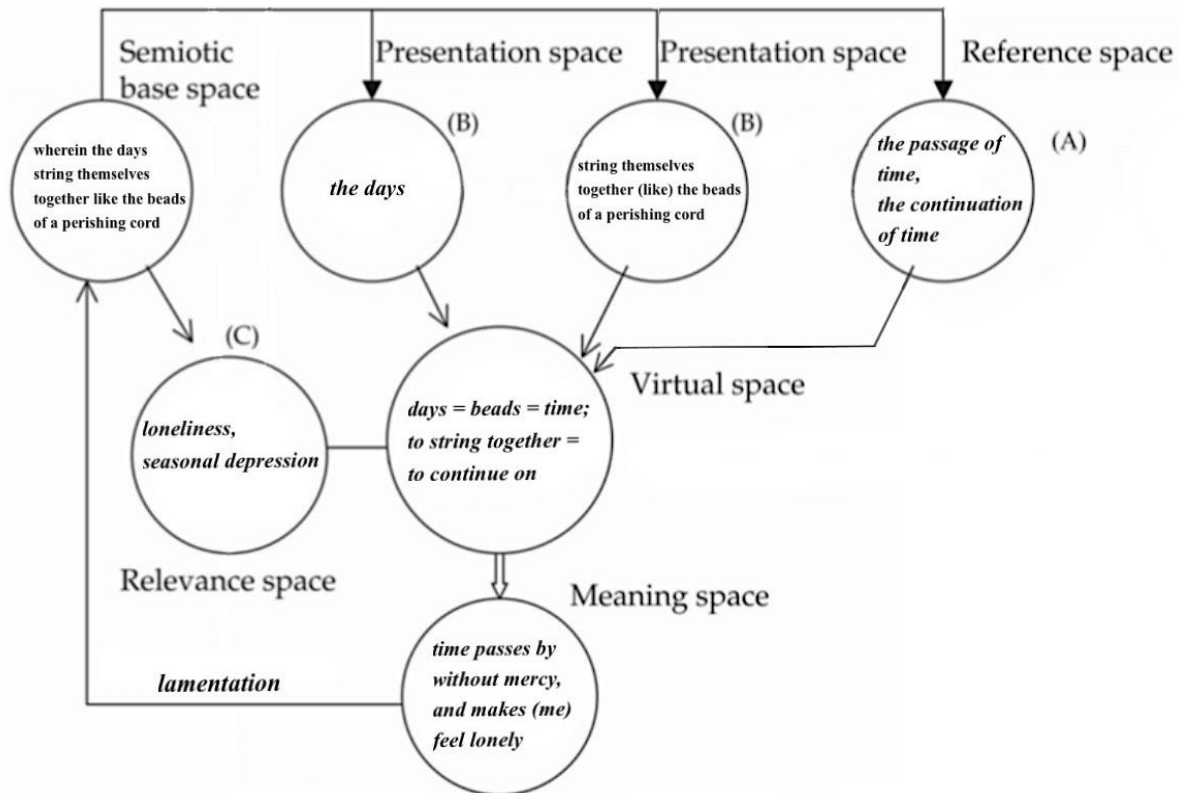
Example (3) is taken from the story *De Gezichtenhandel* ('The Face trade'), and is uttered by the artist Terpen Tijn. It is a contraption of two idioms: '*iets aan je laars lappen*' ('to patch something to your boot', or in a less literal manner: 'to patch your boot with something') and *'wel onder zijn zolen kunnen schrijven'* ('to (be able to) write underneath his soles').

(3)   "***De kunst wordt altijd aan de zolen gelapt, makker.***"

<< "**The arts always get patched onto the soles, mate.**" >>

- Terpen Tijn, *De Gezichtenhandel*

The idiom '*iets aan je laars lappen*' ('to patch something to your boot') implies disregard for something. It usually implies that someone does not take note of neither laws, regulations, or norms

whatsoever. The idiom *'wel onder zijn zolen kunnen schrijven'* ('to (be able to) write underneath his soles') implies that something is forgettable. Through careful blending, Terpen Tijn means to say that the arts are not only disregarded, they are also seen as forgettable. The representative Bommodel can be found in **Figure 11: *De kunst wordt altijd aan de zolen gelapt, makker*** below.

In example (3), the structure of the idiom '*iets aan je laars lappen*' ('to patch something on your boot') is used, albeit conjugated:

'[iets] wordt (altijd) aan [je laars] gelapt' - **'[De kunst] wordt (altijd) aan [de zolen] gelapt'**

'[something] (always) gets patched to [your boot]' - **'[The arts] (always) get patched to [the soles]'**

The second idiom is invoked through the use of *de zolen* ('the soles') instead of *je laars* ('your boot'). In spite of it being a single noun, it denotes an entire idiom, and thus carries all of its implications, which in turn gets blended with the other idiom.

Figure 11: *De kunst wordt altijd aan de zolen gelapt, makker*
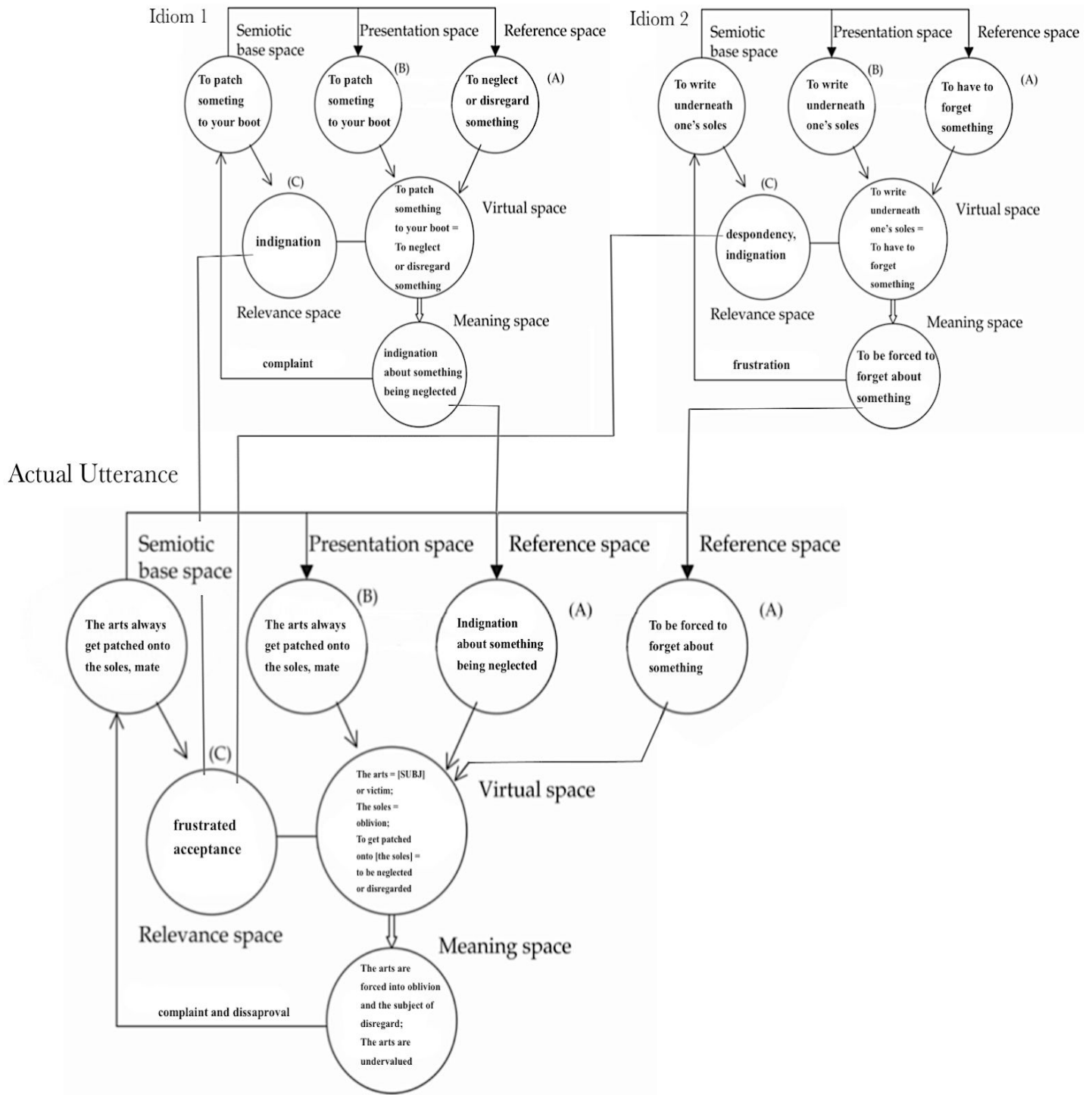
Sup Bittervoorn continues besmirching lord Bommel's mental state in example (5), as given down below. Example (4) also implies that lord Bommel is not mentally sound, and that the circumstances of his journey took a toll on his (already small) mind. It is a very simple idiomatic blend, containing one idiom only.

(4)   *"De ellende is Bommel in de erwt geslagen; (...)"*

       << **"The misery hit Bommel in the green pea; (...)"** >>

- Sup Bittervoorn, *Het Griffoen-ei*

The idiom *'het is hem in de bol geslagen'*/'it hit him in the sphere (or rather, head)' implies that someone has gone crazy. The idiom is invoked by the use of its recognizable structure:

'[het] is [hem] in de [bol] geslagen' - ***'[de ellende] is [Bommel] in de [erwt] geslagen'***

'[something] hit [someone] in the [head]' - '**[misery] hit [Bommel] in [the green pea]***'*

The utterance is meant to imply that the near-death experience lord Bommel went through previously has driven him out of his mind, if only for a little while.

Interesting is the use of *de erwt*/'the green pea' in this context, as it serves to add another layer to the meaning of the phrase. *de erwt*/'the green pea' substitutes the Dutch term *bol*, which can mean either 'sphere' or 'head'. In this context, *de erwt*/'the green pea' refers to lord Bommel's head. More specifically, to his mind and intelligence altogether: to have a brain the size of a pea implies that someone is dimwitted, and as such, Sup Bittervoorn implies that lord Bommel is considerably stupid.

Blended, the phrase gains the following meaning: lord Bommel, who already is pretty dumb, has gone fairly mad (making him into even less of a reasonable person). Add the context of Sup Bittervoorn's slander, and the full meaning emerges: don't listen to lord Bommel's stories - they are without credit.

The accompanying Bommodel is given in **Figure 12:** *De ellende is Bommel in de erwt geslagen*.

Figure 12: *De ellende is Bommel in de erwt geslagen*
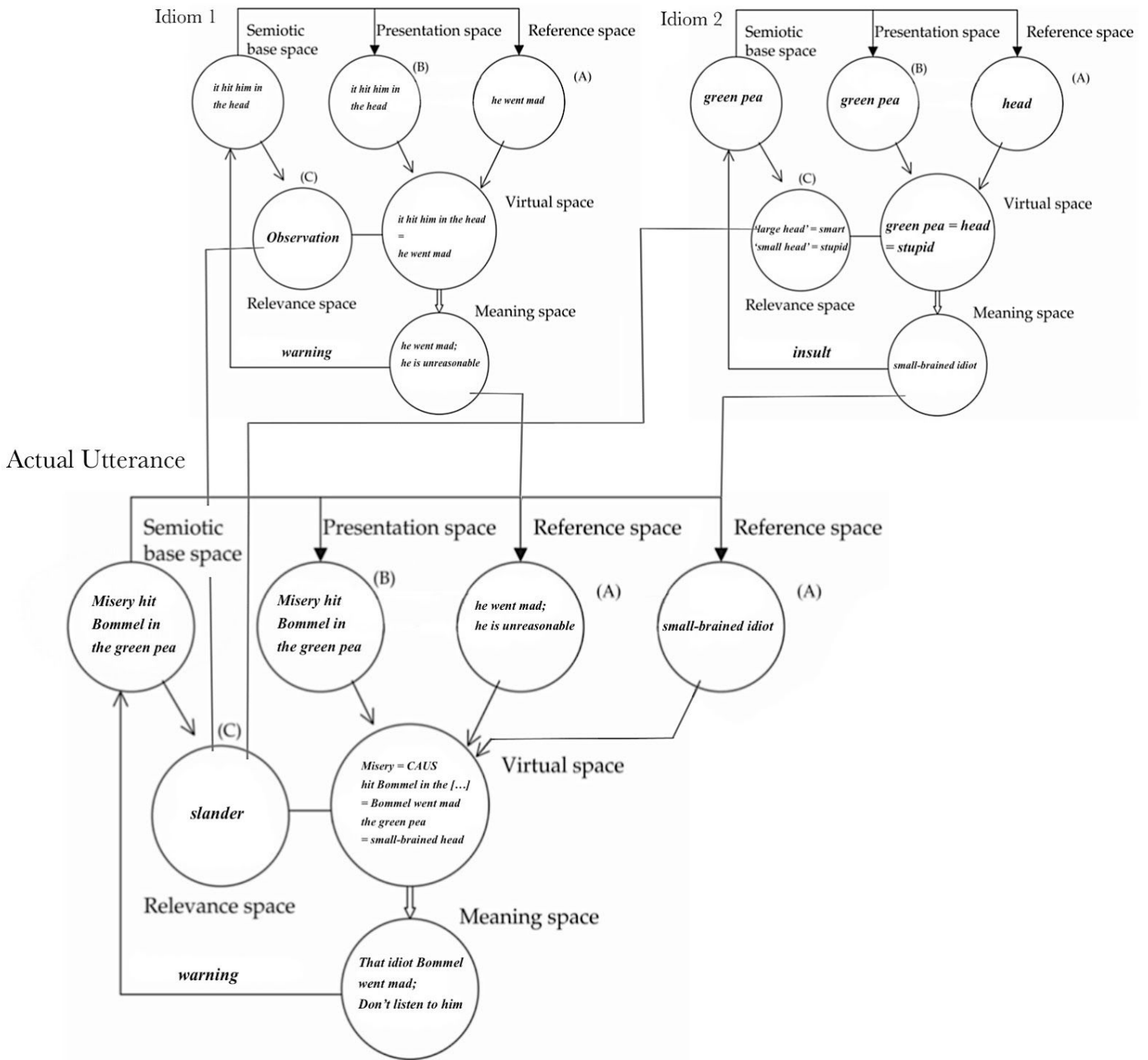
Example (5) below occurred shortly before Sup tried murdering lord Bommel while diving. The sentence in example gets uttered during one of lord Bommel's private talks with himself. Previously, he had publicly made the decision to go on a deep-sea treasure hunt (with Sup), and even volunteered to do the deep-sea diving himself as well - something he has never done before. Later that evening, he sits in his cabin wondering whether he can even do it at all, expressing himself using the phrase as written in (5). Example (5) is a contraption of two Dutch idioms: *teveel hooi op je vork nemen*, 'to take too much hay on your fork', and *een last op je schouders dragen*, 'to carry a burden on your shoulders'. The idioms are blended into a single, questioning phrase:

(5)   ***"Zou ik niet teveel hooi op mijn tere schouders hebben genomen?"***

          << **"Wouldn't I have taken too much hay upon my delicate shoulders?"** >>

- lord Bommel, *Het Griffoen-ei*

The idiom *teveel hooi op je vork nemen*/'to take too much hay on your fork' implies that a person is taking on a task that is too difficult for them to fully see through.

The idiom *zijn schouders ergens onder zetten*/'to put his shoulders under something' implies having to put effort into finishing a task (comparable to the English idiom 'to put some weight into it').

The blend in (5), ***"Zou ik niet teveel hooi op mijn tere schouders hebben genomen?"/*"Wouldn't I have taken too much hay upon my delicate shoulders?"**, adds doubt to the sentence by phrasing it as a question to oneself, and even mentions that the shoulders in-use are *teer*/'delicate', unbefitting of hard work. As such, the following meaning emerges: the work that needs to be done will be too much effort for lord Bommel, and he has overestimated his capabilities. As such, the utterance becomes one of latent regret.

The Bommodel given in **Figure 13: *Zou ik niet teveel hooi op mijn tere schouders hebben genomen?*** shows the blended idiom as a mental space network. Note that, although the Relevance spaces are connected to one another, the *vastberadenheid*, 'determination' that usually is present when using the idiom *zijn schouders ergens onder zetten*/'to put his shoulders under something' actually is negated due to the questioning nature of the sentence, thus turning determination into doubt.

Figure 13: *Zou ik niet teveel hooi op mijn tere schouders hebben genomen?*
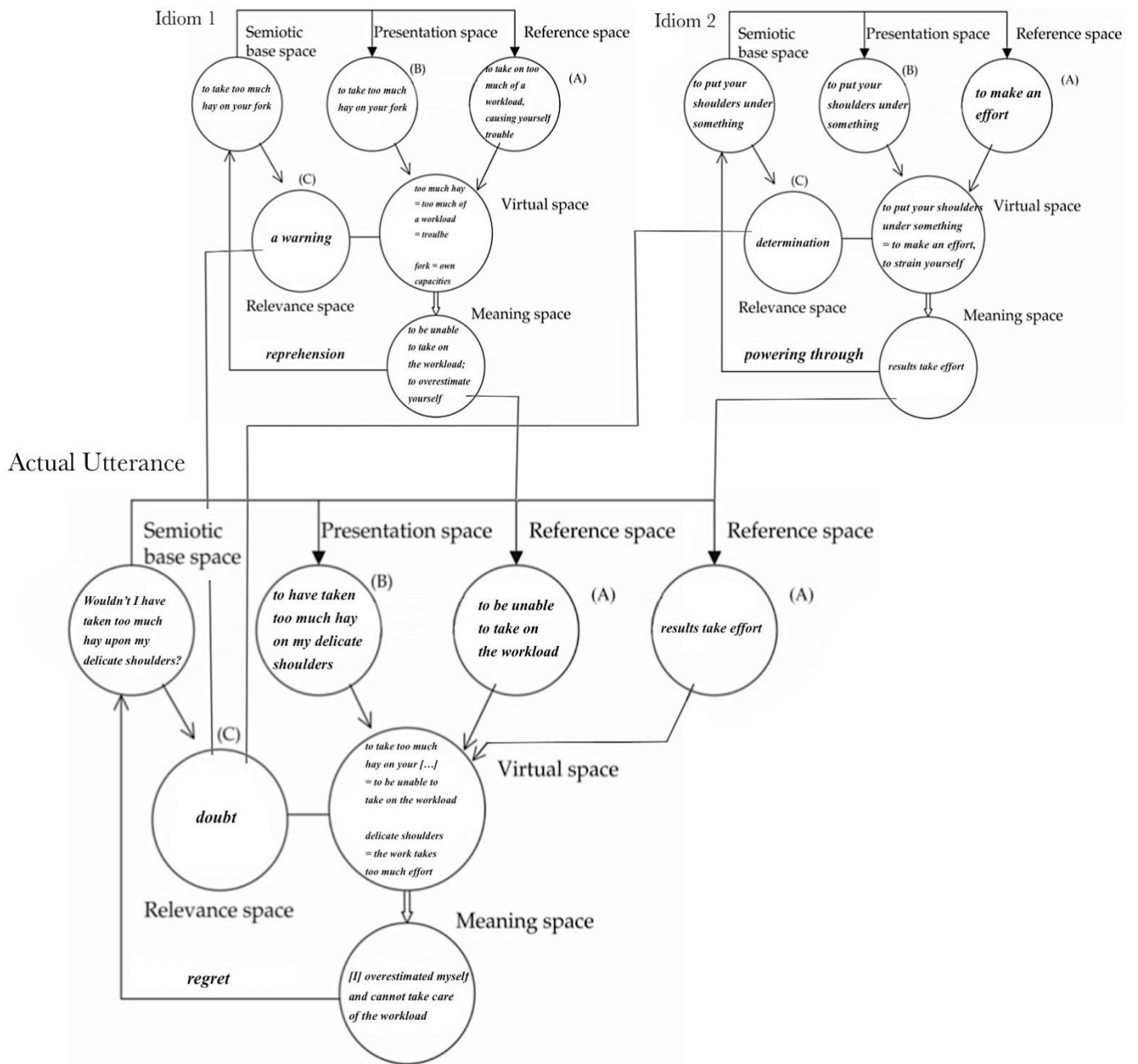
Example (6) is taken from a different issue from the Bommel saga: *De Waarde-Ring*.
In example (6) below, lord Bommel, affectionately referred to as lord Ollie (a diminutive of his actual first name, Olivier), still is busy lamenting his current state. He does so by expressing his state figuratively: his insides, both his guts as well as his mind, are being torn apart by feelings, as evil vapors are working in his liver. The first part of the sentence ('*Mijn innerlijk wordt verscheurd*' / 'my insides are being torn apart' -- '*Door gevoelens bedoel ik.*' / 'By feelings I mean.') gives context to the second part of the utterance. My Bommodel, as shown in **Figure 14: (...)** ***dat de kwade dampen me op de lever geslagen zijn***, focuses on the second part of the sentence, which is emboldened in (6) down below.

(6) *"Pfff," sprak heer Ollie moeilijk. "Ik voel me niet zo goed. Mijn innerlijk wordt verscheurd. Door gevoelens bedoel ik**. Ik ben bang, dat de kwade dampen me op de lever geslagen zijn…"***

<< "Pfff," spoke lord Ollie with difficulty. "I don't feel so well. My insides are being torn apart. By feelings I mean. **I fear that (the) evil vapors hit me on my liver…"** >>

- lord Bommel, *De Waarde-Ring*

First, further elaboration on the first metaphorical sentence, which evokes the context of the second metaphorical phrase. In *Mijn innerlijk wordt verscheurd. Door gevoelens bedoel ik./*'My insides are being torn apart. By feelings I mean.', lord Bommel expresses his emotional hardships. He mentions that his *innerlijk*/'insides' (or rather, his 'inner life' specifically) are being torn apart. In the second phrase, he names the culprit: *gevoelens*/'feelings'.

The verb *verscheuren*/'to tear apart' is a transitive verb with a subject and an object, wherein the subject is the one doing the tearing. *Verscheuren* often involves the violent and willful destruction of an object. '*Verscheurd worden*' is directly related and means 'to be torn apart', wherein the subject is the one being torn into, which involves being the subject of a violently destructive action. When a living being is being torn apart, this tends to cause heavy physical pain and unwilling removal of limbs.

In the case of example (6), the subject being torn apart is the noun *innerlijk*, which refers to lord Bommel's insides: his inner life. The concept of Inner Life is something entirely non-physical, and thus cannot be torn apart in a literal sense. Even so, the noun still carries connotations of being (part of) a living being, and as such, the verb *verscheurd worden*/'to be torn apart', implies the causation of conceptual anguish as if it were a physical pain. The one causing all of this hurt is *gevoelens,* translated as 'feelings' in this context. In example (2), *gevoelens*/ 'feelings' have gained the ability to tear apart something else, and are afflicting this blight onto poor lord Bommel's inner life, causing anguish.

Taking all this into account, it is time to show the Bommodel in action in **Figure 14: (...)** ***dat de kwade dampen me op de lever geslagen zijn*** below. This simple emboldened phrase in example (2) is, in fact, a blend of one idiomatic phrase and two idioms.

Figure 14: (...) *dat de kwade dampen me op de lever geslagen zijn*
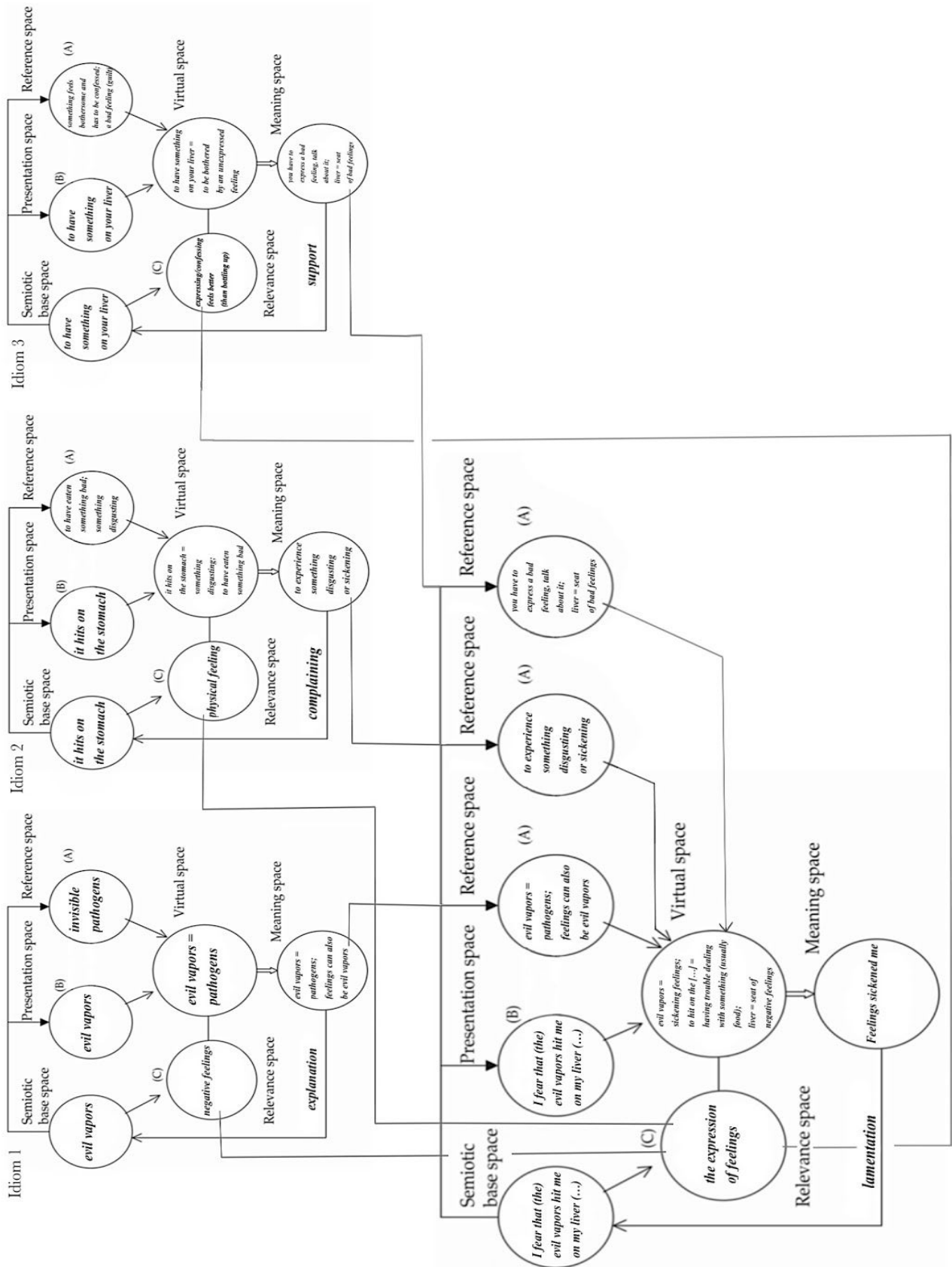
Kwade dampen/'evil vapors' are figurative causes of illness - or rather, pathogens. Some vapors - miasmas - were thought to be invisible carriers of disease (e.g. the plague), which would spread and cause physical ailments at entering the body. *Kwade dampen*/'evil vapors' are non-existent concepts that were thought to genuinely infect the physical body (Terwen 1844; Kuiper et al 1898). Lord Bommel makes use of these connotations by blending them with two Dutch idioms: *iets op je lever hebben*/'to have something on your liver' and '*op de maag slaan'*/'to hit on the stomach'.

In example (6) above, the part **op de lever/'on my liver'** triggers the frame *iets op je lever hebben*/'to have something on your liver'. This idiom implies that something, usually a nagging feeling, is being bottled up and needs to be released, or that someone did something wrong and is feeling guilty over it.

The part **me op de [lever] geslagen zijn'/'hit [me] on [my liver]** is reminiscent of the idiom *op de maag slaan*/'to hit on the stomach', which implies having eaten something foul (and tethering on the brink of feeling like you are about to come down with food poisoning), or something disgusting. Its meaning triggered and blended with *lever*/liver gives rise to an emergent meaning: something disgusting - the pathogenic, invisible *kwade dampen* 'evil vapors' - are being digested by the liver, which is the seat of bottled-up guilt and misery.

It is important to note that the culprit of anguish in the first metaphorical part of the phrase, *gevoelens/*'feelings', has a direct impact on the connotations of *kwade dampen*/'evil vapors' in the second part. These invisible, ungraspable pathogens are, in fact, invisible and ungraspable feelings, which only serves to highlight lord Bommel's anguish. As such, to the reader it is clear that lord Bommel is sick with guilt and misery of an unknown cause.

Example (7) occurs during the story *De Grijze Kunsten*, wherein lord Bommel, once again, is having an argument during dinner. He reacts with the following sentence:

(7)   *"Jouw galligheid slaat me op de maag!"*

     << "Your galliness hits me on the stomach!" >>

- lord Bommel, *De Grijze Kunsten.*

It contains, once again, the blending of a known idiom with an idiomatic phrasal: the idiom *op de maag slaan*/'to hit on the stomach' (like example (6) above), and the metaphoric use of *galligheid*/'galliness'.

Galligheid/'galliness' is an idiomatic phrase: during the middle ages, an excess of black bile was thought to be the cause of misanthropy and depression (Terwen 1844; Kuiper et al 1898). As such, when someone is being *gallig* ('like bile'), it means that someone is being misanthropic ,acting out negatively. In turn, *Jouw galligheid*/'Your galliness' implies that ''you're being an active misanthrope'.

Like in example (6), the idiom *op de maag slaan*/'to hit on the stomach' implies having eaten something rotten and feeling like mild death because of it. In the case of example (7), it is *jouw galligheid*/'your galliness' - misanthropy - that causes such blight. Combined with lord Bommel having actual dinner, the full meaning of the sentence emerges: "due to your misanthropy, I feel both unhappy as well as devoid of hunger. Quit your yapping."

The accompanying Bommodel showcasing this can be found below in **Figure 15: *Jouw galligheid slaat me op de maag!***

Figure 15: *Jouw galligheid slaat me op de maag!*
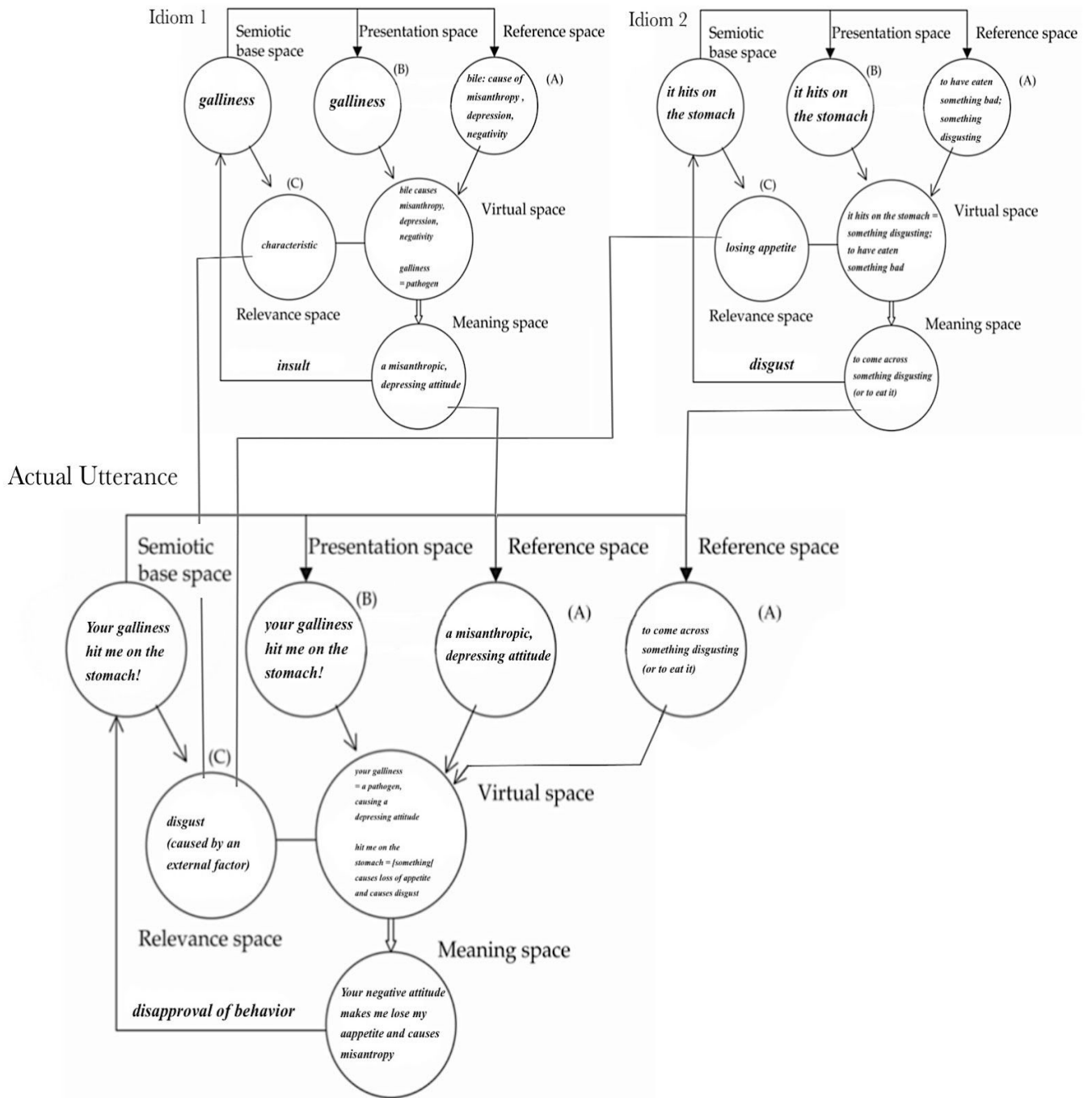
Example (8) and (9) are taken from the story *De zonnige kijk* ('The sunny outlook'), wherein there is a looming economic relapse that needs to be prevented, a scientist - known as professor Sickbock - who invented literal rose-tinted glasses (which then are used to trick people into thinking that painted rocks are massive gold nuggets), and a certain lord Bommel who takes responsibility and the blame when everything goes off the rails - to the point of being about to lose his beloved ancestral castle, *Slot Bommelstein* ('Castle Bommelstein').

In example (8), professor Sickbock attempts to get a fellow researcher, the aurologist Lurx, to wear pink glasses in order to keep up his deception. The glasses possess a special kind of power: they cause its wearer to look at the world in a fantastically positive light - a perspective which even makes painted rocks look like high-quality gold.

(8)   *"Wilt u dit **oogscherm** even opzetten, collega?"*

   << "Would you like to put on this **eye-screen**, colleague?" >>

The emboldened term in example (8) consists of a simple compound that carries a couple of connotations: *oogscherm* ('eye-screen' or 'eye-shutters'). The compound consists of the nouns *oog* ('eye') and *scherm* ('screen'). It is the name that professor Sickbock, who actually is a manipulative scientist and regular antagonist in the Bommel saga, gave to the *roze brillen* ('pink glasses', or more elaborately translated: 'rose-tinted glasses') that he invented on accident a couple of pages earlier.

An *oogscherm* ('eye-screen') may refer to both a pair of protective glasses meant to protect the eyes from harmful substances, as well as a clever blend of *oog* ('eye'), implying sight and insight both, and *scherm* ('screen'), which implies a screen to hide something from sight. In-context, it is quite a clever compound to use, especially when paired with the imagery of pink glasses, and all of the connotations the latter brings into the picture as well.

In Dutch, wearing a *roze bril* ('pink glasses') implies being in love. It also implies that someone is blinded by love, and is unable to see faults in their object of affection. Looking at the world through a *roze bril* ('pink glasses') means that one sees the magnified beauty of the world, while being blind to its less savory bits. In English, the term 'rose-tinted glasses' would carry similar connotations: having an unduly idealistic, sentimental, or romantic perspective of something. In spite of having similar connotations, I will still refer to Sickbok's *roze bril* as 'pink glasses', as the connotations are just slightly different enough to matter.

In **Figure 16: *oogscherm*** below, the representative Bommodel may look fairly similar to those shown in previous examples. In these figures, part of the input spaces concerning the *roze bril* ('rose-tinted glasses') relies on visual content. Textual content, however, is amply provided throughout the overall story as well - the title is *De zonnige kijk* ('The sunny outlook') after all. The entire story takes off once lord Bommel puts on a pair of rose-tinted glasses and forgets about his worldly responsibilities, as he only wishes to gawk at the world's beauty. He continuously refers to himself as 'having a sunny outlook on life' (as his good old father would say), meaning, 'having a positive outlook on life', and thus incidentally keeps on implying the power of his rose-tinted glasses.

Figure 16: *oogscherm*
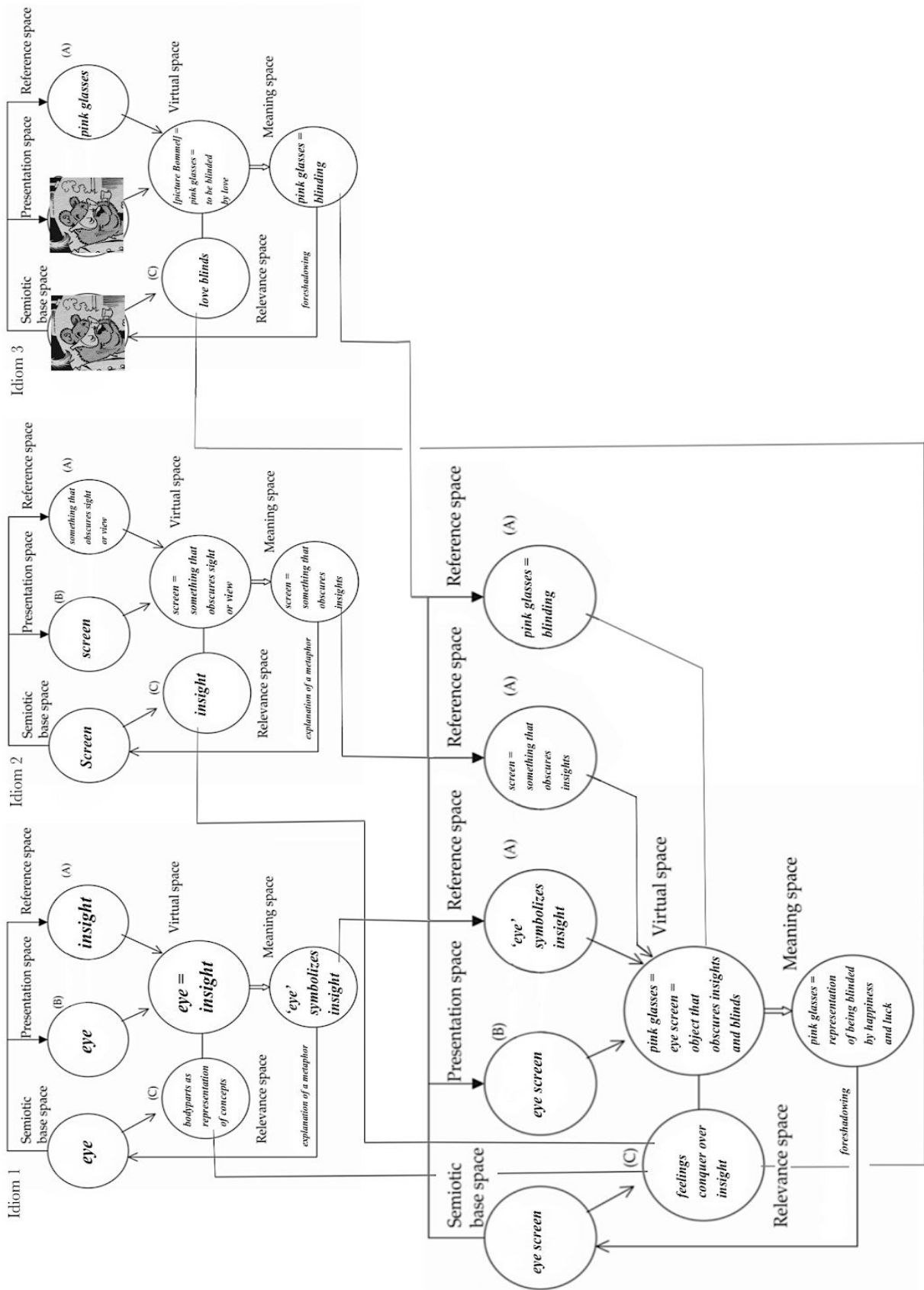
Example (9) occurs when lord Bommel finally takes off his pink glasses, and realizes that he has lost everything: his money, his ancestral home, his friends. He is a broken man when he says the following:

(9)　*"(...). Maar in plaats daarvan heb ik een roze bril opgezet, **zodat ik de zon in het water zag schijnen zonder de put te dempen.**"*

<< "(...) But instead of (doing) that I put on a pair of pink glasses, **wherefore I saw the sun shine on (the) water without dampening the well.**" >>

It is a contraption of two idioms: *de zon in het water zien schijnen*/'to see the sun shine in the water' and *als het kalf verdronken is dempt men de put*/'only when the calf has drowned, the well gets dampened'.

De zon in het water zien schijnen/'to see the sun shine in the water' implies being able to bear - or even take joy in - other people's good fortune (when you yourself get none). *Als het kalf verdronken is dempt men de put/*'only when the calf has drowned, the well gets dampened' implies that only after a disaster strikes, a preventive action gets undertaken in order to avoid a repeat of the same or similar mistakes. In the case of the first idiom, the sentence can be interpreted in three different manners: (i) *literally:* throughout the story, lord Bommel got too preoccupied by nature's beauty to care for anything else, due to his rose-tinted glasses; (ii) *traditionally idiomatic:* lord Bommel was happy about other people's good fortune, and did not neither worried about nor cared for about his own; (iii) *in the context of the second idiom:* the water lord Bommel had been admiring for its lovely shimmering was the water from a well - or rather, he had been preoccupied by beauty while at the brink of a preventable disaster (which he did not prevent due to his preoccupation).

The Bommodel of **Figure 17: (...)** *zodat ik de zon in het water zag schijnen zonder de put te dempen* shows a wholesome analysis of the sentence's meaning: lord Bommel was too occupied by beauty and other people's good fortune that he failed to prevent an avoidable if not straight up obvious disaster that had been hiding in plain sight, obstructed by the 'sunny outlook' from his pink glasses.

Figure 17: (...) *zodat ik de zon in het water zag schijnen zonder de put te dempen*
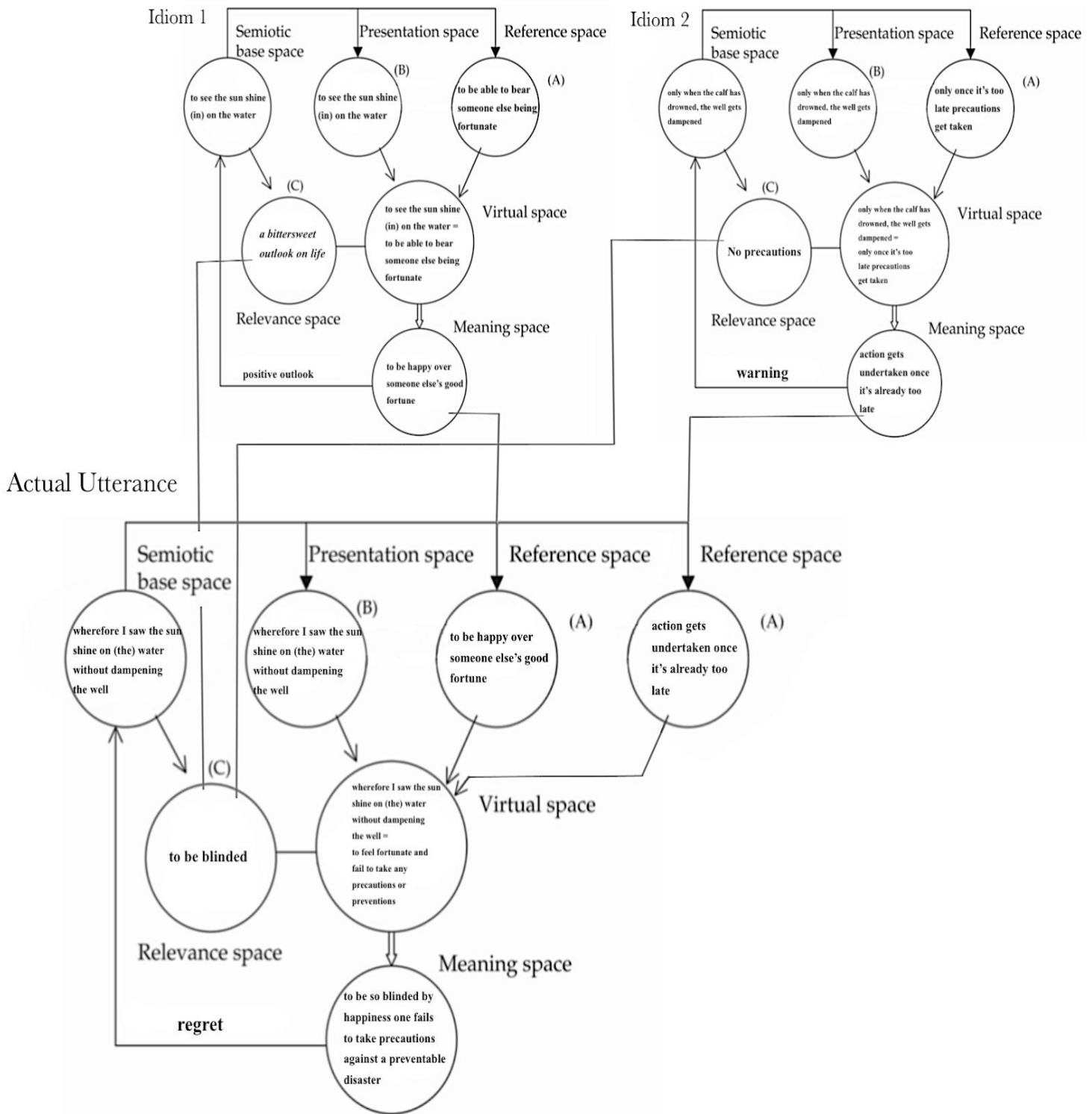
The final example in this chapter also is from *Het Grieffoen-ei:* Sup Bittervoorn makes his final attempt to get rid of lord Bommel during their next expedition. In example (10) down below, he makes an attempt to distract lord Bommel by asking him peer into the water. The emboldened part of example (10) shows some incredible foreshadowing, and the event that is about to occur is quite obvious to every single reader. The only one not picking up on the hint that Sup is planning something nefarious is Lord Bommel, of course.

(10) *"Hip heeft hier gisteren het gezonken schip zien liggen,' legde Sup uit. "Toen hij naar beneden ging om jou te redden, weet je wel? Op deze plek ongeveer. Als je goed kijkt, **zal je vanzelf de lichtjes zien.**"*

<< "Yesterday, Hip saw the sunken ship right here," Sup explained, "When he went down to save you, remember? Around this spot. If you look well, **you'll spontaneously see the lights.**" >>

- Sup Bittervoorn, *Het Griffoen-ei*

This phrase is a blend of three metaphorical references, including one idiom. The model is shown in **Figure 18: (...)** *zal je vanzelf de lichtjes zien*.

At a surface reading, Sup appears to be referring to the lights of a sunken ship. To everyone - except lord Bommel - it is clear that a sunken ship, buried in gallons of water, cannot have any working lights. The sentence contains a covered meaning, blending both the literal references with an idiom and a piece of metaphorical foreshadowing.

Unlike the English idiom 'to see the light', which can mean 'having an intellectual revelation' or 'to die' (also very foreshadowing), the Dutch idiom *het licht zien*/'to see the light' only implies having an intellectual revelation, making a discovery[12]. In example (10), the idiom that specifically implies 'having a revelation' gains a literal meaning as the ship down below is supposed to be revealed to Lord Bommel as he peers over the edge of the rowing boat.

To any seasoned reader of Dutch comics, the phrase *het licht zien*/'to see the light' also has an additional layer of meaning: whenever someone gets beaten over the head in a comic, the impact of a painful blow is accompanied by an array of floating stars. In fact, this kind of common knowledge also is encapsulated in the Dutch phrasal *sterretjes zien*/'to see little stars', which indicates receiving a hit across the head. A known feature of stars is the fact that they have an illuminating presence.

As such, when Sup says lord Bommel is about 'to see lights', a reader knows that he is about to 'see stars', too. Sup's phrase was intentional foreshadowing. And indeed, not even two panels away, lord Bommel gets hit over the head with a moldy board, just as expected.

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[12] Interestingly, however, at asking my native Dutch peers, the Dutch idiom *het licht zien*, 'to see the light' is generally understood as 'to die' nowadays, too.

Figure 18: (...) *zal je vanzelf de lichtjes zien*
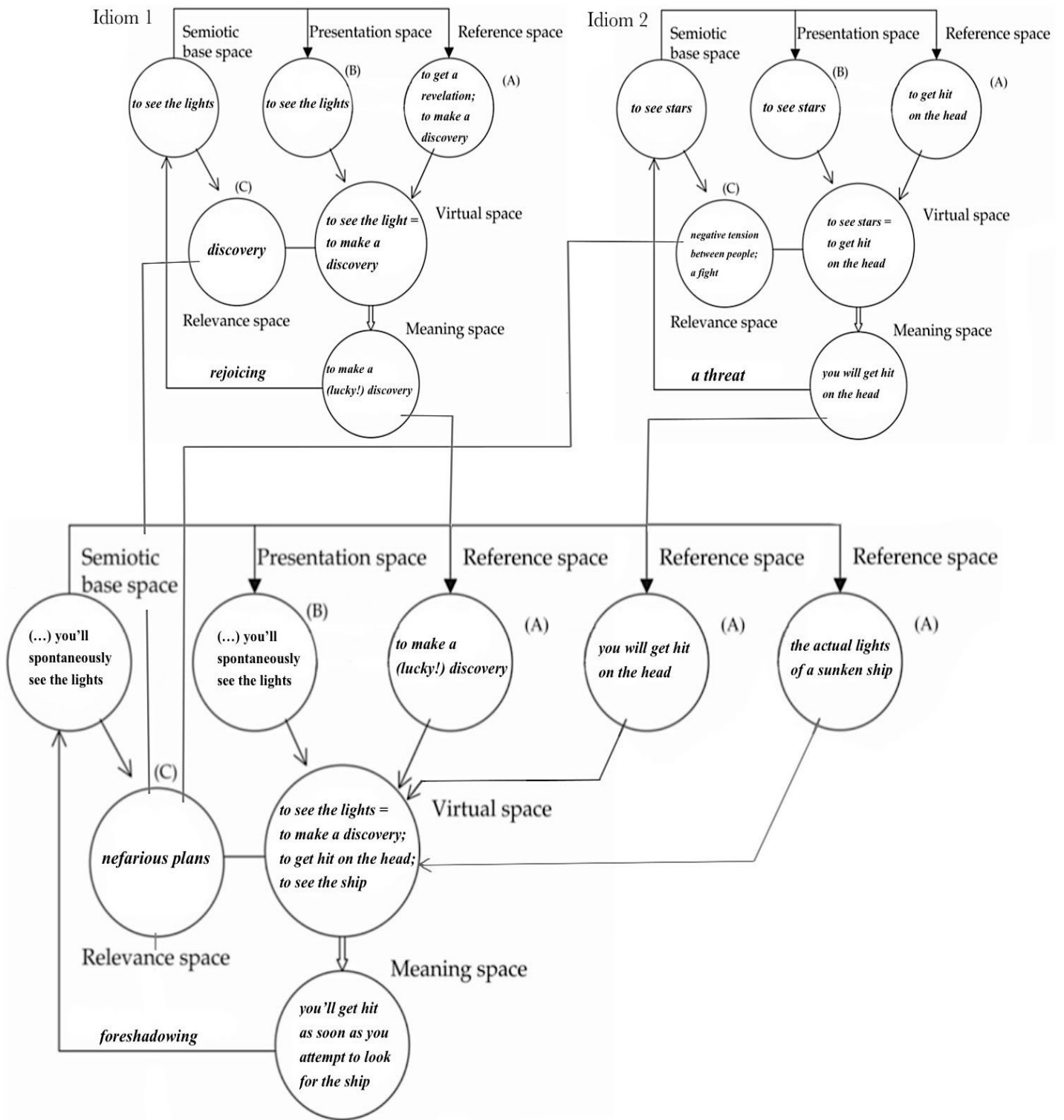
The scene is illustrated in **Picture 2: Not-so-subtle foreshadowing**. Please make note of lord Bommel's pained expression and the twinkling stars near his head.

Picture 2: Not-so-subtle foreshadowing
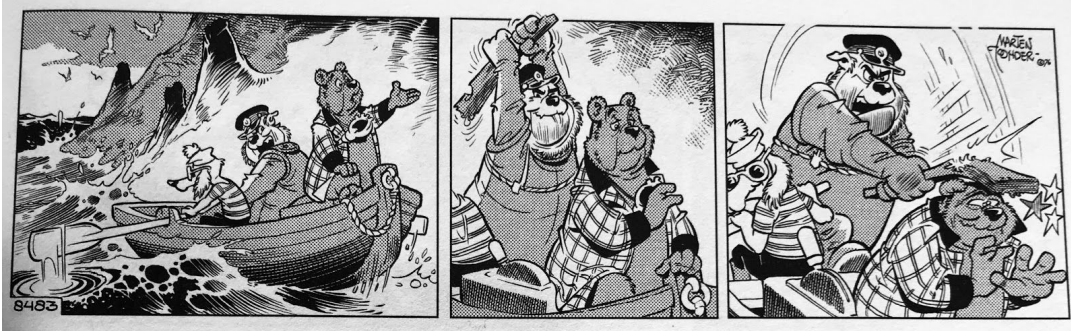
(From: Toonder 2010.b: 41)

4. Conclusions

In this MA thesis, I argued that the conceptual blending of mental spaces enables the understanding of metaphors and imagery. I specifically focused on and analysed the blending of idioms in ten quotes from the Dutch literary comic series *'De Avonturen van Tom Poes'* ('The Adventures of Tom Puss'), mainly referred to as the *Bommel saga*, which was written by Marten Toonder and got issued the newspaper *De Telegraaf* from 1941-1986. All examples were selected by me personally, and were analyzed on a sentential level. The focus of this research was put on the function of integration networks, also known as mental space networks, and the visual representation of complex nested structures.

Mental spaces are small, temporary conceptual packets of information and knowledge that subconsciously form as we think and talk. They are prompted by the use of any meaningful (semiotic) form, such as language, and are dynamically linked with one another. As such, they can be used to showcase the mapping of thought and language (Fauconnier & Turner 2002; Dancygier 2006; Brandt & Brandt 2005.a, 2005.b; Brandt 2013; Ziem 2014). By projecting structures of separate mental spaces onto one another (as visually represented by mental space networks), new meaning may emerge. New meanings emerge through the creation of yet another separate mental space, which is called the blend The blend is responsible for meaning, and is heavily dependent on context, circumstance, and relevance (Turner 1996; Fauconnier & Turner 2001, 2002; Brandt 2005; Brandt & Brandt 2005.a, 2005.b; Dancygier 2006; Brandt 2013). In turn, mental spaces consist of *sememes*, as in this thesis, they are considered larger clusters of semiotic units that are not perceivable in the non-lingual world.

As mental spaces are clusters of *connotational semes* that blend together into endless combinations, blends are made possible through convention. Conventionalized clusters of semiotic units that are present within multiple individuals of the same group are *cultural clusters*, amongst which idioms belong (Eco 1979, 1994).

Long-term mental space networks of specific knowledge are known as *frames*. Frames are usually anchored to specific lexical items or set phrases, such as idioms, or set circumstances - or to put it in short terms: conventions. A complete frame of knowledge, consisting of mental spaces, may appear even when only a single aspect of such a frame is mentioned. They can be used as inputs in integration networks as well, and function just the same as any other regular input. Therefore, they may also produce blends. As such, they may form an even larger frame of knowledge when embedded into one another (Dancygier 2012; Ziem 2014).

In this thesis, I interpreted the nested integration network from Brandt (2005) as a visual representation of a small frame, and suggest its functionality in the analysis of *blended idioms*: the projection of the meaning of two or more idioms onto a blend, in order for new meaning to emerge. This principle can be broadened to: two or more frames projecting their meaning onto a blend in order for new meaning to emerge. In order to do so, I created a new network model, *the Bommodel*, which is an altered version of the nested network model by Per-Aage Brandt (2005). (See **Figure 5: The Bommodel** for the basic concept). The Bommodel is a visual representation of embedded frames - or rather, it is a nested network with two or more frame-based inputs. They are connected through the Reference spaces and Relevance spaces.

Through the Bommodel, it became possible to analyze language use in the Bommel saga, in which the blending of idioms is of great importance. It helped shed a light on the complex, dynamic blending processes in the language of the Bommel saga and further enabled the understanding of metaphors and imagery in Marten Toonder's language use.

On another note, through the application of semiotics, new light was shed on *compression* as proposed by Fauconnier and Turner (2001, 2002). Instead propose that the process of *selection* governs the information input of mental spaces rather than compression to the human scale.

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