

**It's Funny Because it's True:  
A Linguistic Analysis of George Carlin's Language**

MA Thesis

English Language and Linguistics

Eva Renée Ferguson

e.r.ferguson@hum.leidenuniv.nl

s1175122

March 2017

Supervisor: Drs. A. A. Foster

Second Reader: Dr. A. G. Dorst

To Louis Raubenheimer and Frans Reijman,  
Who transferred their love for language onto me.

## Abstract

This thesis researches the figurative language aspects of George Carlin's language. It presents a grammar of humor for comedians who wish to copy his style of comedy. It aims to find out whether written and spoken humorous language adheres to humor theories as proposed by Walter Nash and Salvatore Attardo. The questions whether Carlin was a typical American comedian and whether the figurative language he uses adds to the persuasiveness of his message are answered by a discussion of Nash and Attardo's theories, a discussion of the iconic features of American humor, and a figurative language research adhering to the MIP and MIPVU methods of metaphor research and Nash and Attardo's figurative language theories. Carlin deviates from the American humor standard and uses a considerable amount of figurative language in his writings and stand-up material. This thesis shows that this language adds to the persuasiveness of the underlying message. Ultimately, this thesis explains the importance of humor in everyday life.

### Acknowledgements

I thank my supervisor, Drs. Tony Foster for his willingness for supervising me, his patience, keeping up with all of my emails, and his many insightful tips and suggestions. Moreover, I thank my second reader, Dr. Lettie Dorst, who also made helpful suggestions in the final stages of writing my thesis.

I thank my wonderful parents for supporting me throughout life and especially this latest academic adventure, for never giving up hope and providing me with the occasional guilt-trip for not having finished yet.

Many thanks go out to my sensational sisters, who have always been there for me, even though we are miles apart. Special thanks to my sister Julie who was always willing to answer any academic questions I did not dare bother my supervisor with.

A humongous thanks goes out to my man, Wes, for only rolling his eyes whenever I started howling with laughter about some horrible pun I came across during my research and then bothering him with it, and for the death glares whenever I did not feel like writing. Thank you for putting up with my lazy self.

Thank you, Nienke, for being my oldest friend and for always believing I could do this.

Thank you, Robin, for being proud of me and moving back to the Netherlands.

Thank you, Talitha, for forcing me to finish and providing the many coffee/beer/cocktail breaks I desperately needed. May there be many more, I have masses of time now!

## Table of Contents

<b>List of Tables.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>List of Figures.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Literature review .....</b>	<b>10</b>
Psychological theories of humor .....	10
The language of humor and linguistic humor theories.....	12
Different types of humor .....	19
American humor .....	21
American Humor vs. British Humor .....	24
George Carlin as a research subject.....	26
<b>Chapter 2: George Carlin's style .....</b>	<b>28</b>
The Life of George Carlin .....	28
Carlin's Influences .....	29
FCC.....	30
Carlin's Style of Comedy.....	32
Comic or comedian? .....	32
Entertainment vs. Critique .....	33
Taboo .....	34
Profanity .....	35
George Carlin's style of humor .....	36
Anger Management .....	37
A grammar of George Carlin's humor .....	38
Carlin's influence on other comedians.....	40
<b>Chapter 4: The Figurative Language Researches .....</b>	<b>44</b>
Methodology .....	44
Results.....	49
Discussion.....	63
<b>Chapter 5: Conclusion .....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Appendix A: George Carlin's Figurative Language.....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Appendix B: George Carlin's Metaphors .....</b>	<b>84</b>

## List of Tables

Table 1. Puns.....	49
Table 2. Figures of Speech.....	50
Table 3. Varieties of Formulation.....	53
Table 4. General Overview of Metaphors.....	57
Table 5. Division of OBJECT, PLANT and ANIMAL source domains.....	57
Table 6. Division of Conventional Metaphors.....	61

List of Figures

Figure 1. Types of humor.....20

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Humor comes in many forms. It is found all over the world in ordinary conversation, novels, plays, TV shows, and movies. In other words, humor is an omnipresent phenomenon. By virtue of modern technology, humor in the form of stand-up comedy is now available to the masses. Websites such as Netflix or YouTube offer large amounts of stand-up comedy from a variety of comedians twenty-four hours a day. Humor provides many interesting opportunities for academic research. Many studies have been done on the psychological effect and the social functions of humor. Martin (2007) states that humor is an ‘inevitable and important aspect of human social interaction in all areas of our lives’ and can ‘serve many different social functions’ (p. 370). Martin focuses on the ‘mental processes’ involved when we perceive something to be funny (p. 31). While most previous research studies the psychological aspects of humor, the linguistic side of humor has proved to be very interesting as well. Linguists such as Attardo (1994) and Nash (1985) have proposed various linguistic humor theories, which describe figurative language features of humorous language found in written texts such as novels and plays.

Attardo and Nash provide linguistic evidence in their research which shows that humorous language differs from other types of language. However, there is no current research available to support Attardo’s and Nash’ theories. What is more, the studies conducted by Attardo and Nash themselves solely researched humorous language as found in written texts and not found in other types of humorous language, such as stand-up comedy. Neither seem particularly interested in the workings of the language of stand-up comedy. Furthermore, there are no current studies available where the theories of Attardo and Nash tested on the language of stand-up comedy to see whether this type of humorous language adheres to the same theories as written humorous language.

This thesis strives to fill this research gap by analyzing the language of American comedian George Carlin. It researches a number of his written texts that also appear in his stand-up shows and looks for metaphors and other figurative language such as puns, schemes and tropes as proposed by Attardo and Nash. This thesis studies the possibility of a grammar of humor for George Carlin, and how productive such a grammar is. Moreover, it answers the question whether Carlin was a typical American comedian in regards to his personal style of humor and performance. Most importantly, since many comedians provide their audience with a message in their shows, this thesis answers the question whether the researched figurative language adds to the persuasiveness of Carlin's message.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter 2 provides the literature review for the research. It discusses several psychological and linguistic humor theories and compares British and American humor.

Chapter 3 revolves around George Carlin's personal style of humor and comedy. It provides Carlin's life story and some important influences. Furthermore, chapter 3 provides a grammar of humor for George Carlin and compares Carlin's style of humor and performance with Australian comedian Jim Jefferies.

Chapter 4 of this thesis provides the completed research. It provides the methodology, results, and discussion of those results for both the metaphor and the other types of figurative language research.

Chapter 5 presents the conclusion of this thesis and answers the research questions posed above.

## Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter provides an overview of previous research and introduces the aspects of comedy and humorous language this thesis will research. It will first explore and discuss several psychological humor theories in order to explain the human need for humor. Secondly, it will discuss and explain different linguistic theories of humor. These theories serve as a starting point for the linguistic research provided in chapter 4 of this thesis. Subsequently, this chapter provides a discussion of the different types of humor and distinguishes between inclusive and exclusive humor, and discusses which of the two the following chapters focus on in regards to George Carlin. Furthermore, this chapter will discuss American humor and explain it can be distinguished from British humor. Finally, this chapter provides an explanation as to why George Carlin was chosen as a research subject.

### **Psychological theories of humor**

In *The Psychology of Humor*, Martin provides a psychological approach to the phenomenon of humor. His purpose is to provide an ‘integrative review of theory and research findings in all areas of the psychology of humor’ (p. xv). He discusses other scientists’ approaches to humor such as Darwin and Freud and focuses on the main psychological theories of humor, as well as its effects.

Martin discusses five general psychological theories of humor that have been ‘most influential in psychological humor research’: psychoanalytic, superiority/disparagement, arousal, incongruity and reversal theory (p. 31). The psychoanalytic, superiority and incongruity theories will be briefly explained and discussed in this section. The other two theories will not be discussed since they are largely derived from the psychoanalytic and superiority theories.

The psychoanalytic theory of humor states that the ‘purpose of laughter is to release

excess nervous energy' (p. 33). When the energy that has built up in the nervous system is no longer needed, the human body must find a way of releasing that energy, and laughter is one way for this. According to Freud, the built-up energy are most often of an aggressive or sexual nature, and the reason why people enjoy jokes is the fact that jokes enable one to experience the 'illicit pleasure' derived from the release of some of these 'primitive sexual and aggressive impulses' (p. 33).

The superiority theory of humor also revolves around human aggression. This theory assumes that much humor is based on 'aggression and hostility' (p. 43) and that, in fact, humor itself is a 'form of aggression' (p. 44). People laugh at what they find ridiculous in other people, 'feeling delight instead of pain when they see their friends in misfortune'. This theory assumes that humor results from a sense of superiority derived from the disparagement of another person's blunders or foolishness' (p. 44). The superiority theory also states that laughter is a way of restoring homeostasis in the human body after an excess build-up of energy.

Lastly, the incongruity theory of humor states that humor occurs when there is a 'mismatch or clash' between people's 'sensory perceptions of something' and their 'abstract knowledge or concept about that thing' (p. 63). This theory assumes that laughter results from the 'sudden, insightful integration of contradictory or incongruous ideas, attitudes, or sentiments' (p. 63). This theory of humor works well in explaining why people laugh at puns: 'two meanings of a word or phrase are brought together simultaneously,' and clash (p. 63).

From the theories discussed above, it has become clear that the human need for humor is based on the need for the release of nervous tension and the need of feeling good about oneself. Over the course of this thesis, it will become clear that George Carlin style of humor can largely be explained by the superiority theory of humor. The fact that his audience laughs at his jokes can be explained by the other two theories discussed in this section.

Martin also comments on the social psychology of humor. He states that humor has numerous social functions in areas such as social perception, interpersonal attraction, communication, attitudes, prejudice, and persuasion (p. 113).

Another important function of humor is anger management. This notion ties in with the relief theories of humor such as the psychoanalytic theory. Humor can resolve 'unintentional tension' to 'nothing' and thereby generate laughter (Francis, 1994, p. 150). In this way, humor can deflect unwanted emotions such as fear and anger. Humor can also operate in an opposite manner, by dealing with your own anger by stating your opinions in such a way that they seem comical (while still carrying a laden message).

### **The language of humor and linguistic humor theories**

#### **Attardo's 'Linguistic Theories of Humor'**

Theories of humor tend to be psychological rather than linguistic. While what happens in our minds while listening to or reading comedy is of vital interest to researchers, it is the language of humor that this thesis researches.

In *Linguistic Theories of Humor* (1994), Attardo also focuses on humor theories and stylistic elements of humorous language. According to Attardo, humor is an 'all-encompassing category, covering any event or object that elicits laughter, amuses, or is felt to be funny' (p. 4). He divides humor theories into three categories: essentialist, teleological, and substantialist. Attardo mentions that the first two categories are the study of 'sociolinguistic approaches' (p. 2). He explains that it is 'widely recognized that humor research is an interdisciplinary field' (p. 15), and that it started with the great philosophers Plato and Aristotle. In those times humor was seen as a 'mixed feeling of the soul' (p. 18) and as a 'stimulation of the soul' (p. 20). Up until the nineteenth century, 'linguistics showed little to no interest in humor' (p. 46). This changed when Freud offered his views on the subject of humor, and thereby largely shaped the manner in which we think about humor today. In these

modern times, a three-way classification of modern theories of humor exists: ‘incongruity theories’ which deal with contrast, ‘theories of ‘hostility and disparagement’ which deal with aggression, superiority, triumph, and derision, and ‘release theories’ which deal with sublimation and liberation (p. 47).

In chapter 2 of his book, Attardo concerns himself with the linear organization of jokes. Every joke must consist of two parts: the ‘narration/presentation’ and the ‘dialogue’ (p. 63). Attardo explains the three narrative functions of jokes in general: normalization (which puts characters in their situation), interlocking (which establishes a problem or question to be solved), and disjunction (which solves the problem in a humorous manner) (p. 86). Attardo concludes that a ‘joke-text is the result of the concatenation of the three narrative functions’ (p. 89). He also distinguishes between ‘referential’ and ‘verbal’ jokes (p. 95). Referential jokes are based ‘exclusively on the meaning of the text and do not make any reference to the phonological realization of the lexical items’ while verbal jokes do precisely this (p. 95). There is a ‘marked preference’ for referential jokes. It is not clear what causes this but it is thought that because verbal jokes have a ‘higher degree of sophistication’ they may be harder to process and are therefore ‘scarcer’ (p. 103). Furthermore, verbal jokes tend to be ‘based on lexical ambiguity’ rather than ‘syntactic ambiguity’ (p. 104).

In chapter 3, Attardo explains that puns have been the object of humorous research in the structuralist framework for a long time (p. 108). Attardo lists a pun ‘taxonomy’ that will be discussed further in chapter 4. It is interesting to note here that ‘puns can be, and have been, used as evidence in linguistic research’, for they can be seen as evidence of pronunciation in diachronic linguistics’ (p. 141). Puns are ‘coextensive with speech errors’ and can therefore be used as ‘evidence in the same way errors are used’. Moreover, puns seem to have ‘connections with other phenomena beyond speech errors and so may shed light on a broader variety of linguistic phenomena’ (p. 141). In chapter 5 of his book, Attardo explains

that humor consists of a process of ‘alienation’ or ‘defamiliarization’ (p. 176). This alienation is realized by a ‘shifting of a sign (a word, an action) from its context’. Humor is seen by Attardo as a kind of language that is ‘characterized by the negative, or paradoxical, value assumed by the sign’ (p. 176). Like ‘metaphor’, Attardo calls humor an ‘aesthetic use of language’ as a ‘deviation from a norm’ (p. 176). Other than linguistic dimension, social dimension play a great part in the ability to grasp the humor of a joke. Attardo states that one can only ‘properly comprehend humor by viewing the humorous text in its social dimension’ (p. 182). This social dimension involves three roles: ‘the joke teller, the hearer, and the butt of the joke’ (p. 182).

In chapter six Attardo introduces the Semantic Script Theory of Humor (SSTH). It is ‘the most powerful epistemologically and promising theory available in the field on linguistic-based humor research’ (p. 207). Attardo explains a script as an ‘organized chunk of information about something’ (p. 198), or a ‘reading’ of a stretch of text (p. 203). It is a ‘cognitive structure internalized by the speaker which provides information on how things are done and organized’ (p. 198). All texts consist of several scripts, and it is not the ‘overlapping of two scripts’ that is a ‘cause of humor per se’ (p. 203), but rather the opposition of the two scripts that makes the text funny (p. 204). In other words, the funniness of a text relies on its ambiguity, as the following joke shows: “Is the doctor at home?” the patient asked in his bronchial whisper. “No,” the doctor’s young and pretty wife whispered in reply. “Come right in.” The state of the patient’s voice indicates that he would like to see the doctor for treatment rather than solely having relations with the doctor’s pretty wife. These two different ‘readings’ of the text oppose each other, and with that the joke becomes funny.

Attardo states that ‘linguistics cannot account for the differences between good and bad jokes’ (p. 215). This notion is part of the SSTH. The SSTH, because it relies on scripts, does not distinguish between verbal and referential humor (p. 220). Because for the SSTH all

jokes are based on opposition, all jokes can be seen as basically the same (p. 220). At the end of this chapter, Attardo introduces a revised version of the SSTH: the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH). He considers it an improvement on the SSTH in that it is not exclusively for semantic research; it includes other areas of linguistics as well, including textual linguistics, the theory of narrativity, and pragmatics (p. 222).

In chapter 7, Attardo states that humor is an ‘aesthetic phenomenon, and as such tends to be artificial’ (p. 233). Here he mentions that when a joke expressed in a particular register includes a word from a far more formal or oppositely less formal register, it will elicit laughter (p. 234). This is what Attardo calls register humor: ‘humor which is caused by incongruity due to or caused by register’ (p. 245). In chapter 9, Attardo discusses several communicative functions that jokes have been shown to perform (p. 288): ‘by using humorous utterances, the speakers can avoid committing themselves too strongly to what they say’ and ‘speakers intersperse humorous remarks in their narratives to show that they can take it’ (p. 288). Finally, Attardo remarks that ‘some part of the information in jokes must be left implicit’ (p. 289), for a joke will no longer be funny or humorous if it is explained.

In his second to last chapter, Attardo discusses the ‘relationship between jokes and the contexts in which they occur’ (p. 293). In this setting, there are two types of jokes: canned jokes and conversational jokes (p. 295). He defines a canned joke as a joke ‘which has been used before the time of utterance in a form similar to that used by the speaker, such as those which are found in books, collections of jokes’ (p. 295-296), whereas a conversational joke can be defined as being ‘improvised during a conversation’ and drawing ‘heavily on contextual information for its setup’ (p. 296). The two are not mutually exclusive. A canned joke may become part of a certain context when spontaneously put into conversation. A comedian’s monologue can most correctly be interpreted as conversational or situational. Not consisting of canned jokes, which can be almost completely decontextualized’, a comedian’s

monologue will ‘attempt to connect jokes by their theme or with some sort of narrative connection’ (p. 298). Another important difference between canned and conversational jokes is that conversational jokes ‘build on previous jokes’ (p. 299), and thereby to acquire an extra degree of funniness by doing so. Moreover, building on previous jokes almost always happens in a comedian’s routine.

Attardo states that the ‘use of humor in conversation is found to enhance its memorability’ and to ‘stand out’ (p. 318). To put it shortly: ‘humor makes one's presence felt’ (p. 318). The social functions of humor can therefore be divided into two categories: primary (effects that the speaker may achieve directly by using humorous segments or texts in his/her discourse) and secondary (effects that are achieved either indirectly or without the knowledge or intent of the user) functions of humor (p. 322-323). The list of primary functions includes social management (p. 323), decommitment (p. 325), probing, salvaging, mediation (p. 326), and defunctionalization (p. 328). The secondary functions of humor are the acquisition of new information (p. 329) and taboo information, and the revelation of some information about the speaker (p. 330)

### **Nash’ ‘Language of Humour’**

Nash’s *The Language of Humour: Style and Technique in Comic Discourse* (1985) focuses on the stylistic elements of humorous language. This book is a good starting point to discover what it is exactly that makes humorous language stand out from ordinary language. Nash starts out by stating that one must have a certain level of intelligence to fully appreciate comedy, for ‘to understand the broadest humor, one must be broadly informed’ (p. 4). Not only does one need knowledge of the world in general, a certain linguistic competence is also of vital importance, for ‘if we lack the linguistic competence to grasp its multiple implications, the humor of the remark must be greatly enfeebled’ (p. 15). The first aspect of

humorous language Nash touches is the fact that it ‘dances most often on the points of some dual principle’, an ‘overt appearance’ and a ‘covert reality’ (p. 7). This means that most jokes revolve around a subject that might make people somewhat uncomfortable. Nash continues by mentioning that there is a vast difference between ‘oral and textual humor’ (p. 20), for oral humor ‘expands in elaborate networks’ of for instance friends, and textual humor expands ‘in ways more subtle and comprehensive’. It is the study of humorous texts that allows Nash to propose the ‘three modes of humorous expansion’ (p. 21) for textual analysis is more easily accessible. The three modes of humorous expansion are: ‘generic, linguistic, and interactional’ (p. 21). Generic expansion refers to ‘elements of a genus or genre’ of ‘literary forms, conversions and cultural facts’ as in the ‘allusion to facts, social conventions and traditions’ (p. 21). Interactional expansion stands for ‘the relationship between the comedian and his or her audience’ (p. 21). This mode of expansion presents itself in the ‘pragmatics of response’ (p. 21): the comedian’s control of his audience, the signaling of the intention to joke, but also in the ‘logic of what is proposed’; its requirement of the audience to make certain suppositions and its implications (p. 22). George Carlin’s methods of interactional expansion will be discussed in chapter 3. Lastly, Linguistic expansion is ‘the patterning of syntax, semantic, and sound’ (p. 21), as in features such as rhyme, rhythm and semantic concords such as synonymy and hyponymy (p. 22). It is the mode of linguistic expansion that this thesis is concerned with in the research results provided in chapter 4.

According to Nash, there are ‘two aspects of joke design’: the ‘method of extended narration’ and the ‘construction of witticisms in formulaic patterns’ (p. 27). In the course of chapter three of his book, Nash presents an assortment of aspects of humorous language, which he calls ‘varieties of formulation’ (p. 38). These include, among others, ‘definitions and verdicts’ (‘one-liners with syntactic patterns typically involving the copulative verb BE’) (p. 38), ‘glossed propositions’ (‘one-line jokes consisting of an enigmatic proposition

followed by an explanatory comment') (p. 39), and 'Jonathanisms' ('the tall-ordering personifier of American folk humor. Jonathan says X is so Y that Z.') (p. 46). All of these will be explained and explored in detail in reference to George Carlin's language in chapter 3.

Nash also states that 'many jokes and anecdotes have a likelihood factor', in that they 'require the acceptance of some absurd proposition' (p. 104). This means that the listener/reader must keep an open mind and be at least a little imaginative in order to be able to appreciate the joke. According to Nash, the 'point and power of the anecdote' lie in the 'responses of the characters within the story' (the wording of the comedian's phrases) rather than 'the reader/listener's reaction to some gross departure from likelihood' (p. 107). This means that it is the comedian's job to detach his audience from a certain reality with his words, while simultaneously adhering to a certain truth about the world. Nash therefore suggests that 'comedy is always deeper than the verbal game' (p. 123).

Similar to Attardo, Nash finds the question as to what makes language particularly funny a difficult one. He even suggests that there is no clear answer to that question. He does mention that some 'items' of language (words, phrases, etc.) are 'intrinsically humorous' (p. 126), but that the search for the intrinsically funny is a 'forlorn enterprise'. Nash explains that it is safer to assume that the 'properties of humorous expression are defined extrinsically' so that words and phrases seem funny because of their 'contextual linkages and semantic relationships' (p. 127).

It is the play of words that the comedian produces that 'draws up the lurking and fishy meaning' of his utterances. Nash focuses here on twelve varieties of puns. He provides a list similar to Attardo's taxonomy of puns. Both these authors' information on the subject will be discussed in chapter 4. Another typical element of humorous language that Nash discusses is the fact that 'overstatement and understatement are major principles of comic staging (p. 169-170), for the use of either one of these constructs a kind of 'humorous frame' which

‘encourages in the audience a different set of suppositions and anticipations. These frames can be unsettled by the device ‘counterstatement’ (p. 170).

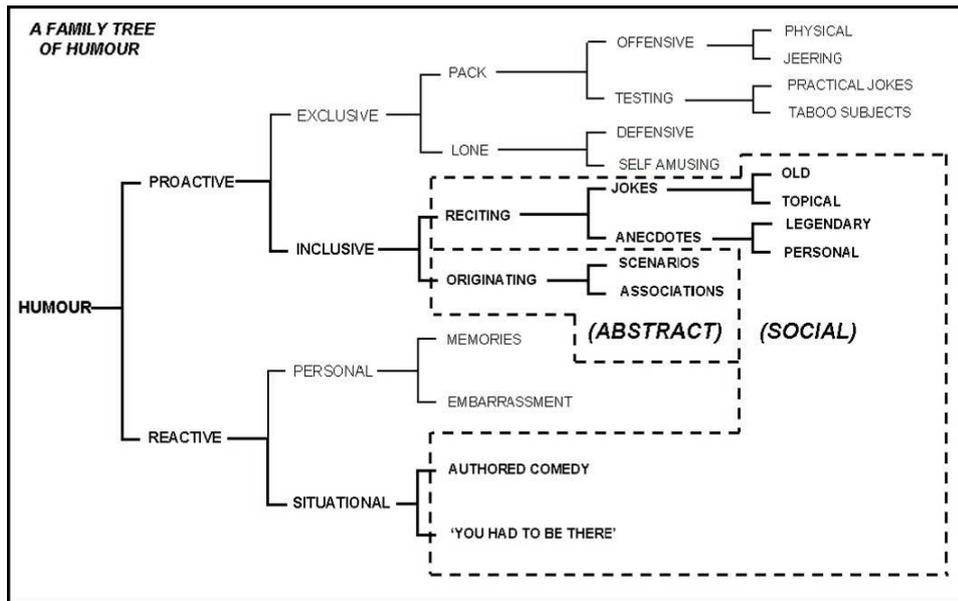
The last element of humor that Nash discusses is the ‘performance element’ (p. 170). This is one of the most important elements of comedy. No matter how well-written a comedian’s act might be, the words will not have any effect if they are not delivered in a certain confident manner. Nash therefore says: ‘It ain’t what you say, it’s the way that you say it’ (p. 170). The performance element refers to a comedian’s personal style. George Carlin’s style and body language will be discussed in chapter 3.

All in all, Attardo’s and Nash’s books will form the basis for the research on George Carlin’s language. Both of these authors’ theories of humor show similarities as well as differences. While Attardo provides a far more general linguistic discussion of humor, Nash presents more detailed linguistic categories of humor. Also, while Nash’ theories distinguish between verbal and referential humor, Attardo’s SSTH does not, for this theory sees every joke as basically the same: an opposition of scripts. Moreover, while Attardo states that a comedian’s monologue has to be conversational since it contains no canned jokes, Nash does solely distinguish humorous language from ordinary language and does not seem to regard a comedian’s monologue as a different type of humorous language. On the other hand, both authors seem to agree on the notion that linguistics cannot account for the funniness of a particular joke. Moreover, they both list a similar list of the different types of puns that can occur in humorous texts.

### **Different types of humor**

Below is a scheme of different types of humor (source unknown), displaying a sort of family tree. This family tree will help explain the different types of humor there are.

*Figure 1.* Types of humor.



In the realm of humor, the first split one encounters is between ‘proactive’ and ‘reactive’ humor. The difference between proactive and reactive humor lies in the fact that in the case of proactive humor you make the humor happen and in the case of reactive humor you simply respond to other people’s humor. When reacting to someone else’s humor, the response can be personal or situational. Personal reactions evoke memories, embarrassment, or both. Situational responses happen when one is, for instance, listening to, or attending a comedian’s performance.

Karakus, Ercanb, and Tekgöz (2014) explain four humor styles that correspond to the inclusive and exclusive humor that the humor family tree denotes. They state that in literature, humor has ‘two positive styles (affiliative and self-enhancing)’ and two ‘negative (aggressive and self-defeating)’ styles (p. 1195). These humor styles ‘represent the ways that individuals use in order to cope with others, relationships and stress in everyday life’ (p. 1195). They define self-enhancing humor as encompassing ‘personal aspects of humor’ and referring to a ‘humor style that individuals use to cope with stress, change their perspective about problems or minimizing negative emotions’ (p. 1196). The other positive humor style, affiliative humor, is described as a ‘humor style in which individuals focus on others while not ignoring their

own needs', it is used in a 'respectful manner (toward oneself and others)' and is often used to 'improve relationships and interactions among people' (p. 1196). The first form of negative humor is aggressive humor. Karakus, Ercanb, and Tekgöz describe this type of humor as a 'style in which individuals use humor in a socially inappropriate, detrimental way in the expense other in order to satisfy their own needs about their superiority and pleasure' (p. 1196). The last type of humor they describe is self-defeating humor. This is a humor style in which 'individuals do not regard their own needs' and 'constantly bash and denigrate themselves in a humorous way' in order to deny their true feelings and to pretend to be happy in order to make 'others also fall into this category' (p. 1196).

According to Attardo (1994), aggressive humor is what we call 'exclusive humor' (p. 50). Exclusive humor thus resonates the psychological psychoanalytic and superiority/disparagement theories of humor. The other cohesive forms of humor can be seen as inclusive. It seems that the humor styles referring to the individual fall out of this spectrum. However, these types of humor are important, for as will become apparent, George Carlin makes use of self-enhancing humor.

### **American humor**

Since everybody has his own view as to what is funny or humorous, it should come to no surprise that entire cultures differ on this standpoint as well. In an article on Lexiophiles.com, it is stated that 'a nation's wit is linked to the historical development of [that] country'. This ultimately means that every country has its own comedy culture in every aspect of that country's heritage, such as politics and literature. It is also good to keep in mind that every person differs as to what they find funny. There are certain factors that determine this: age, personal experience, level of education, and geographical location. Therefore, what may be funny in one country is often not funny in another. A person's individual interpretation determines whether he or she gets a joke. This seems to be similar to the theory

of Universal Grammar (UG). Everybody has the ability to use language, but geographical location and culture determines how your own grammar develops. One's sense of humor also seems to be determined by the culture one grows up in. The question to be answered now is what defines American humor as an individual cultural phenomenon.

Mintz (1977) argues that 'humor is a potentially useful tool' for it is particular to a nation, region or social group and differs in each period of time (p. 17). It is therefore that 'the literary humorist' is a valid 'spokesman' and a 'representative of the population of the time' (p. 17). This means that American humor has changed through time. Mintz states that the main change American humor has undergone is the 'reversal of the positive attitude toward the democratic hero' (p. 17). Since humor is a 'significant expression of belief, disposition, and concern' (p. 18), it must be assumed that the American people have become increasingly cynical and disbelieving over the years, for modern American humor is defined by 'negativism, chaos, nihilism, and hostile, aggressive wit' (p. 19). Mintz states that the newer humor has drifted toward a 'thorough negativism', which has ultimately resulted in an 'anti-democratic, anti-optimistic, anti-progressive' type of humor (p. 20)

Limon (2009) defines the American prototypical male stand-up comedian as having opposing characteristics: he must be phallic and excremental, paternal while infantile, both threatening and abject (p. 306). To him, American humor is a means to truth, and it should be used as a tool of speaking 'truth to power' (p. 306). Moreover, he states that it would be good if American humor 'took political shape as constructive liberal satire' (p. 306). This indicates that Limon does not believe that humor is presently used as that constructive liberal satire.

In his article, Hill (1963) marks the separation of what he calls 'native' humor from what is called 'dementia praecox' humor (p. 170). He describes native humor as having a 'native element' (p. 170), in that it contains a 'set of values that affirms common sense, self-reliance, and a kind of predictability in the world' (p. 171). Hill calls the native humor

protagonist ‘less neurotic, more competent to face reality because he is prepared to accept its ugliness and to admit its brutality’ (p. 171). This is vastly different than Hill’s description of modern humor, or dementia praecox humor, which he calls ‘urbane, sophisticated, witty’, and, according to him reflects ‘the tinge of insanity and despair of contemporary society’ (p. 170).

Dudden (1985) defines American humor as ‘vulgar and violent, in ethnic, political, or sexual forms’ (p. 8). Moreover, it is ‘beyond the fringes of social respectability’ (p. 8). He describes the ‘alienated and self-detached’ humor that became increasingly popular in the 1970s and 1980s as ‘skeptical, sardonic, mocking’ and even ‘deliberately cruel’ and ‘anarchistic’ (p. 9). He goes on to explain that American humor does not ‘follow a formula’ but does tend to ‘attack society’s follies and fools indiscriminately’ (p. 9). Also, when in the presence of American humor, one should ‘gain a sense of the nation’s true history’ (p. 9). Dudden fails to explain what is particularly funny about American humor. This is because the answer is ‘not susceptible to academic analysis’. Humor is no longer itself when under ‘examination’. In other words, if one has to explain a joke, it is no longer funny.

On the other hand, Weber (1962) argues that humor ‘must be explored’ on its ‘many levels of existence’ (p. 507). He mentions that humor occurs everywhere in everyday life (‘all areas of cultural expression and experience’) and so there is a wide range of materials available for study. He mentions that American humor revolves around ‘cultural tensions and resolutions’ (p. 505) and that humor has ‘played a dynamic, even radical role in [the American’s] cultural experience’ for it ‘depends on a fixed background of conventional beliefs, attitudes’ (p. 506). Humor provides ‘cultural analysts with a complex fusion of the status quo and its antitheses’ (p. 506). Weber also states that because humor ‘springs forth’ from a ‘fixed background of reality, it is usually grounded on a reliably realistic base’ (p. 506).

The question of what the precise function of humor in American society is also needs answering. In general, humor tends to 'air social taboos', provide 'social criticism', 'consolidation of group membership', and a 'defense against fear and anxiety' and it also allows for intellectual play (The Unbounded Spirit).

### **American Humor vs. British Humor**

A question that arises is whether two different cultures that share a language also have the same sense of humor, or share a comedy culture. In a thesis that compares the British and American versions of the TV show *The Office*, Looney (2009) has captured the differences between British and American humor. She analyzed what types of humor were most prominent in each version of the show and found that the US adaptation utilized the humor types 'misunderstanding, disappointment, infantilism, peculiar sound, rigidity, and slapstick' significantly more often than the UK version (p. 25). Oppositely, the UK version showed 'greater amounts of superiority humor' than the US adaptation (p. 28). A possible reason for these differences is the 'concept of the American Dream,' which 'still lives on today as an essential part of the American identity' (p. 26). Looney argues that the American optimism that is needed to 'comprehend such a dream' was impossible for Europeans to understand (p. 26).

Looney's analysis of both versions of *The Office* shows that oppositely to earlier opinions, Americans do understand irony, for both versions used the same amount of irony. However, she did find a difference in the use of sarcasm. Looney argues that this difference can be explained by the fact that 'Americans are uncomfortable with unnecessary impoliteness and negativity' (p. 29). Ultimately, Looney states that all differences between American and British humor are the result of cultural differences, but that 'cross-cultural humor interpretation is not impossible' (p. 35).

Simply stated, because the American and British cultures differ, their humor and

comedy also differ. However, due to modern technology and social media, the two are steadily growing more similar, although characteristic differences remain. Lexiophilia.com states:

‘The American sense of humor is generally more slapstick than that in Britain. I think this arises from a cultural difference between the two. Their jokes are more obvious and forward, a bit like Americans themselves. British jokes, on the other hand, tend to be more subtle but with a dark or sarcastic undertone. There is usually a hidden meaning. This may stem from the fact that British culture is more reserved than American culture.’

Simon Pegg (the actor known from *Hot Fuzz* and *Shaun of the Dead*) comments on American and British use of irony:

‘Although it is true that we British do use irony a little more often than our special friends in the US. It's like the kettle to us: it's always on, whistling slyly in the corner of our daily interactions. To Americans, however, it's more like a nice teapot, something to be used when the occasion demands it. This is why an ironic comment will sometimes be met with a perplexed smile by an unwary American.’

Americans, on the other hand, Pegg states, are so ‘scared’ to offend someone that when they do use irony, they often feel the need to add the phrase ‘just kidding’ to prevent doing any damage.

Listening to George Carlin’s shows and audiobooks forces one to conclude that Carlin does not conform to this particular aspect of American humor at all. Conversely, he is rather British in his use of irony and he is definitely not scared of offending anyone.

*Vanity Fair* also mentions a major difference between the two humors:

‘Brit humor at its most choleric has a sadomasochistic drive that cuts viciously deeper than the mockery and madcap predicaments of everything from *I Love Lucy* to

Modern Family. It can go so deep into humiliation that it pops out the other side, liberated from any illusion about civility, decency, and fair play. It's the comedy of control freaks gone berserk. Where the American sitcom allows characters to be quirky, rampantly horny, curmudgeonly (Carroll O'Connor's Archie Bunker), and cranky (Peter Boyle's Frank on Everybody Loves Raymond whenever it was his feeding time), it stays within a green zone of acceptable behavior. It never unchains the pathological rage of frustration which John Cleese choreographed as slapstick Kabuki in Fawlty Towers.'

It is evident that American humor differs substantially from British humor in a number of ways. The question of whether George Carlin is a typically American comedian will be answered in the chapter 5 of this thesis.

### **George Carlin as a research subject**

George Carlin has been called many things. Whitehead and Selzer (2008) call him a 'social critic' (p. 397). Reviews on IMDB.com call him 'brilliant', 'genius', 'edgy', and 'the King of comedy'. Many of these reviews also state that everything he says is true. At this point, it has become clear that Carlin is a member of the type of American humor that contains provocative and politically charged subject matter. However, it does not seem that this is all there is to him. In the mainstream definition of what American humor represents, Carlin does not seem to fit at all. Rather, Carlin's type of humor, especially his irony, fits in with what would be typically classified as British humor. There are so many interesting facts about George Carlin that are worth investigating. In a Washington Post review of Carlin's book *Last Words*, Nussbaum describes Carlin as 'a man who found the line between what was sacred and what could be profaned by repeatedly stepping over it'. He also touches the subject of Carlin's influence on the observational humor that defines today's American humor by stating that Carlin himself launched it. In Nussbaum's opinion, George Carlin is a 'genius'.

It seems that Carlin as a comedian and social critic has influenced and inspired many people. The ultimate question yet to be answered is which linguistic features he has used to achieve this. This question will be answered in the following chapters of this thesis.

## Chapter 2: George Carlin's style

This chapter discusses George Carlin's achievements, his style and his influences and how he relates to the anger management theory of humor and the role of political satire in general.

Moreover, this chapter compares Carlin's style of comedy with that of two other comedians.

### **The Life of George Carlin**

George Denis Patrick Carlin was born on May 12, 1937 in New York City. His mother raised George and his older brother Patrick on her own. George's relationship with his mother was problematic. However, despite their differences, George did grant his appreciation for the English language to her, and it is this appreciation that accounts for a considerable amount of his success. Another feature of his upbringing that has rendered him with great success is his aversion towards religion. George and his brother were, not surprising for the descendants of Irish immigrants, raised Catholic. Oppositely from the affinity with language he picked up from his mother, George defied her notions towards a deity (Wikipedia).

After having dropped out of several schools in New York, George Carlin joined the United States Air Force. Having been court-martialed a number of times and also having received many non-judicial punishments, George was discharged early from service in 1957. These facts already paint quite a picture of a man rebelling against authority and what his opinions about the United States government will be in later years.

After his military career, Carlin started working for KXOL Radio as a 'wisecracking radio disc jockey' (Encyclopedia Britannica). Georgecarlin.com reports that then, already, his act had a 'decidedly anti-establishment, satirical flavor'.

Due to the influence of television, Carlin's act had lost the rebellious and satirical tone it had had in the early 1960s. As a result, Carlin grew bored of his act and also his audience, for the audience which had truly understood him had consisted of the people from the folk clubs and coffee houses he performed at in the early years of his career. These people now

formed a 'counter-culture' against a country that was changing. From this point on, George Carlin was one of the spokespeople of this counterculture.

For George Carlin, the 1970s were the start of a new beginning. During this period, he wrote his first solo albums and performed his first solo stand-up comedy acts in theaters, which also aired on television. In 1972 Carlin performed his first solo show *Class Clown* that included his best-known routine, 'Seven Words You Can Never Say on Television'. This routine became so well known and received so much commentary that it became the source for a U.S. Supreme Court decision on foul language (Corcos 2007).

By the end of the 1970s, George Carlin had written and performed multiple HBO specials, written and recorded several albums and gained a widespread following. His popularity continued and grew in the following decades, in which Carlin not only starred in twelve additional HBO specials and published and recorded several books and albums, but also acted in numerous movies and television shows.

### **Carlin's Influences**

The previous section has explored and discussed George Carlin's life and career. This section will expand on this by considering and reviewing aspects of the world Carlin has had a considerable amount of influence on. First, Carlin's attitude towards and his function in American society in general is discussed, followed by a reviewing of the Supreme Court case that was indirectly initiated by him as well as a discussion of several other comedians who supposedly owe their success to Carlin.

As a member of the counterculture and one of its spokespeople, Carlin has rebelled against establishments and institutions of any kind in each of his productions and publications. This view has caused him to be seen by the public as quite the opposite of the average everyday American. In fact, Carlin was known to be the 'dean of counterculture comedians' (Wikipedia). Especially his work after the mid 1980s became progressively filled

with ‘sociocultural criticism on American society’. Carlin’s most popular topics featured in his books and stand-up comedy specials include: American culture, politics and patriotism, the English language, human behavior, religion, and everyday life. It is Carlin’s views on the matter of American culture and politics that have received the most attention. It is also precisely these opinions that caused Carlin to be called not just a comedian, but also, and maybe especially, a social critic.

## FCC

As stated previously, one of the best known and most influential of Carlin’s routines is the “Seven Words You Can Never Say on Television<sup>1</sup>” sketch, which first appeared in his show *Class Clown*. During this routine, Carlin questions and discusses the reasons for having a list of seven words that are considered so ‘bad’, ‘vile’ and ‘suggestive’ that you may never utter them on the public airwaves while the remaining hundreds of thousands of words that the English language comprises are considered okay to say. The routine is truly remarkable in that it encompasses numerous topics that Carlin has rebelled against for many years such as authority and taboo, as well as that it shows the absurdity of the English language.

It is this precise routine that caused George Carlin to be arrested and charged with ‘violating obscenity laws’ (Wikipedia). Moreover, it inspired the court case of the *F.C.C. v. Pacifica Foundation* in 1978. Corcos (2007) discusses the case in minute detail.

The Supreme Court’s ruling in 1978 allowed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) the authority to ‘regulate indecency on the public airwaves (p. 899). It was also clearly messaged that it was George Carlin who successfully identified the seven words that the FCC could regulate on both television and radio (p. 899). Corcos urges the reader to consider the importance of the points Carlin has made in this particular routine.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyBH5oNQOS0>

Carlin addresses the issue of 'indecent' in his dirty words routine. The Supreme Court ruling did not address this issue quite so extensively. Corcos notes that there is a difference between 'obscenity' and 'indecent' (p. 900). She states that the words Carlin denoted as the 'seven dirty words' were not 'necessarily considered bad words, but they were coarse, vulgar and suggestive, or susceptible of indecent double meaning' (p. 903). In his famous monologue, however, Carlin himself points out that this is strange, for the words 'have no meaning by themselves; these meanings are learned' (p. 903).

Carlin has stated that the purpose of his "Seven Filthy Words" monologue was to determine 'the curse words and the swear words, the cuss words and the words that you cannot say, that you are not supposed to say all the time' (p. 908), which includes the realms of radio and television. The routine evoked a discussion and analysis of 'society's attitude toward the use of language' (pp. 908-909). Carlin's monologue also inspired another radio broadcasting, largely resembling his original monologue, that later received a complaint of a listener who stated that the program was highly unsuitable for young children, even though prior to the broadcast it was stated that the program included language which some people might consider 'offensive' (p. 909). The licensee hereafter stated that far from being obscene, Carlin, as a 'significant social satirist of American manners and language' merely used 'words to satirize as harmless and essentially silly our attitudes towards those words' (p. 910). Moreover, Carlin 'grabs our attention by speaking the unspeakable' and by 'shocking in order to illuminate' (p. 910).

Another issue that Carlin's monologue points out is that 'some words are on the list because they suggest certain behaviors as well as indecent' (p. 913). It seems highly illogical that some words are banned from the public airwaves merely because they 'suggest' something instead of stating something as a downright fact. The objection to several of these words occurs because they would be 'sexually suggestive' (p. 914). Carlin himself suggests

that ‘objection towards sexually suggestive language is odd’ since it so clearly opposes itself to violence, an issue that people should have a problem with but ‘yet so many people seem not to object to’ (p. 914). This is a clear example of one of the standpoints of American society that Carlin rebelled so hard against. It shows the absurdity of favoring violence over suggestive language. This is an issue that is still of importance today. Carlin was the first to publicly speak out about subjects such as these.

In the end, the Supreme Court ruling favored the FCC, but it did take into account the vagueness of indecency and obscenity as well as the fact that, once reflected upon, the case pushes you to the opposite extreme: ‘proper respect for the principles of free speech and noninterference by government in matters of public decency and decorum’ (p. 915).

Quite surprisingly, Carlin expressed himself as being proud of the fact that his name is featured in American legal history (p. 900). This is surprising since Carlin is not someone one would normally associate with the wish to inspire rules for what one can and cannot say. On the other hand, this type of influence portrays his overall importance as a comedian. It indirectly shows that humor can, in fact, change the world, even if Carlin has never cared about being decent himself.

### **Carlin’s Style of Comedy**

Each comedian has his or her own manner of addressing his audience and his or her own way of performing a show. This section will explore and discuss George Carlin’s personal style.

#### **Comic or comedian?**

In the episode of College Tour of September 16, 2016, Dutch comedian Jochem Myjer explains that there is a difference between a *comedian* and a *comic*. He would rather call himself a comic, for he does not discuss worldly issues such as politics, war, and religion, but rather sticks to telling his audience his own experiences and drawing his humor from his life

with his friends and family. In this sense, Carlin is a true comedian rather than a comic, as Carlin never discusses personal issues in his shows and mainly reviews worldly issues, the favorites of which are American politics and culture, human behavior, religion and the English language.

The topics that Carlin discusses in his shows constitute the first element of his style that set him apart from his contemporaries and later generations of comedians. As with all comedians, his story is both amusing and relatable. This is an important factor of comedy, for if one does not recognize anything in the story, one would not be able to laugh so easily. In the same episode of *College Tour*, Myjer explains that each and every one of his jokes have to be based on some truth or something that happened to him personally, for if they do not, he feels that he would not be able to tell the joke convincingly.

### **Entertainment vs. Critique**

The second stylistic element that separates Carlin from the crowd is that he not only tells humorous stories for entertainment purposes, but that these stories actually move people. Carlin was a comedian as well as a social critic. From the way Carlin addresses his audience, one notices that he is very critical of many aspects of the United States and its inhabitants. This is another characteristic of humor: it can educate as well as entertain. In his stand-up acts as well as in his books, Carlin applies political satire. Since satire is a genre of comedy that is ‘directed at ridiculing human foibles and vices’ in order to ‘expose and censure such faults’ (Hamilton, 2007, p. 21), political satire specializes in exposing these faults in the realm of politics. Political satire forms a part of Carlin’s shows, mostly when he discusses American presidents. Even though he rarely impersonates these particular political figures, the message he projects is clear. Carlin tells his audience again and again, in a few sentences, what is

especially wrong with a person like president George W. Bush: “I call him Governor Bush, because that’s the only elected office he ever held legally, you know<sup>2</sup>.”

Utterances like these critique as well as entertain, for it is widely assumed that George W. Bush might only have won the presidency twice by means of cheating. This clip demonstrates that Carlin often does several things with a simple utterance: he expresses his opinion, he critiques, he educates, and he entertains. His ability to do many different things simultaneously is a grand theme that resonates throughout his shows.

### **Taboo**

A third stylistic element that sets Carlin apart is his eagerness to break taboos. In the March 1, 2010 edition of the *Library Journal*, Sally Bryant notes how ‘Carlin liked to break the boundaries of free speech with his observations on everyday experiences and big unanswerable questions about, e.g., religion’. In America, taboo revolves around ‘prudery’ (Bens, 1971, p. 215). There are, of course, things that nobody wishes to talk about, but the fear of saying something inappropriate is so high in America that Bens fears it will result in a separation from reality: ‘again and again we turn our backs on the language of reality, hiding from [...] life’ (p. 216). He explains that people employ euphemisms as well as dysphemisms. The difference lies in the fact that a euphemism ‘ensures our comfort’ while a dysphemism ‘ensures our discomfort’ (p. 216). According to Bens, avoiding taboos simply because they are ‘disagreeable, objectionable and unpleasant’, will only detach us further from reality (p. 220).

According to an article on Quora.com, the biggest American taboos are talking about sex and religion. Another major taboo subject is taboo words, or profane language (Quora.com). Bens states that the major taboos in this culture are ‘procreation and elimination,’ or, sex and death (p. 216). Whether Carlin ever read Bens’ article or not, it is

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r7LvUDCcNss>

clear that he strove to stop any potential detachment from reality. In regards to American taboos, George Carlin does not care. He breaks through them all while uttering stream after stream of profane language.

Carlin often lets his audience know that he does not agree with hiding behind language by discussing and ridiculing euphemisms. A famous example of this is when he describes the development of ‘shell shock’ into ‘PTSD<sup>3</sup>’: “I’ll bet ya, if we had still been calling it shell shock, some of them Vietnam veterans would have gotten the attention they needed at the time...” Carlin comes to this conclusion because he is of the opinion that the language hides the seriousness of the condition: “The humanity has been squeezed completely out of the phrase [...] the pain is completely buried under jargon!” It is clear that Carlin wishes to break through taboos because the language describing taboos (euphemisms) do not portray the reality.

Another big part of Carlin’s style of comedy is his use of profanity. This particular type of taboo will be discussed in the next section.

### **Profanity**

According to Seizer (2011) profanity serves a function in stand-up comedy even though profanity is considered taboo in American society. Seizer states that ‘idiomatic and non-denotational use of swearwords helps create a mutually enjoyable, intimate experience for both lay audiences and the road comedy community’ (p. 211). This is because in order for a comedian to successfully gain his audience’s confidence, he has to demonstrate that he ‘can handle the spotlight and deliver the funny, in a register and style that is both accessible and convincing to a roomful of strangers whose tastes and predilections may vary wildly’ (p. 211). Therefore, the register of dirty words ‘plays a large part in orienting audiences to the kind of playful communicative relationship that constitutes live stand-up comedy’. Moreover, she

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vuEQixrBKCC>

notes that ‘audiences attending live stand-up expect to hear speech onstage that would be otherwise, and elsewhere, unmentionable’ (p. 212). She claims that George Carlin is a ‘creative comic genius’ who used taboo language ‘to critical effect’ (p. 212). ‘Peppering a speech with obscenity’ also creates an ‘off the record attitude’ (p. 214). She also mentions that a certain level of truth can be conveyed through the use of profanity, and this is important, for audiences ‘respond to sincerity’ (p. 215). What is more, the use of profane language opens up the discussion of other taboos (p. 230). In Carlin’s case, this implies that his language is a means of discussing the unmentionable, such as issues as religion and sex, while uttering the unmentionable.

George Carlin’s use of profane language will be discussed and analyzed thoroughly in chapter 4, as a part of the metaphor analysis.

### **George Carlin’s style of humor**

There are many aspects of life that humor enhances. Wood et al. (2011) state that humor ‘as been found to impact on the understanding, persuasiveness, and influence of communications’, and that ‘humorous messages are better understood and more likely to be recalled than non-humorous messages’ (p. 318). As discussed previously in chapter 2, there are four major types of humor: positive, enhancing humor directed at the self, positive, enhancing humor directed at others, self-deprecating humor, and negative humor with others as the target (p. 320). In his books and shows, Carlin mostly employs this last type of humor, for instance when he is ridiculing American politicians and social values. This type of humor includes ‘teasing, ridicule, disparagement, and sarcastic comments’ (p. 320). This negative type of humor targeted at others is at the basis of the psychological superiority theory of humor discussed in chapter 2. Carlin also employs the second type (positive humor directed at others) when he speaks of matters such as the English language, for these routines ‘raise

group morale' and 'increase identity and cohesiveness by making people feel included' (p. 320).

**Body language.** Body language is an important aspect of a comedian's personal style. From the viewing of clips of Carlin's material, it becomes apparent that he employs many hand gestures as well as facial expressions.

The first thing one notices when watching Carlin perform is that he never stands still. He walks to and fro across the stage, holding the microphone in his right hand so that the left remains free to enhance his message with wild motions. Occasionally, Carlin's right hand joins the left in gesturing. The more passionately Carlin feels about a subject he discusses, the more energetic his hand gestures become.

Another important feature of Carlin's body language is his facial expression. While his mouth utters the words of his monologues, the upper half of his face tells his audience the way he feels about the subject he discusses. When watching Carlin's face closely while he talks, one notices that whenever Carlin openly ridicules something, he raises his eyebrows all the way up while his eyes almost seem to be popping out of their sockets. Moreover, his eyes flash from left to right quite rapidly at times, as if he wants to look every person in his audience in the eye to convince them that he is right. Lastly, whenever Carlin is mocking or impersonating someone during his performances, he often pulls weird faces: raising one eyebrow, squinting heavily, or pulling his mouth into nonstandard forms.

Carlin's body language shows his audience whether he is ridiculing something and whether one should take him seriously or not.

### **Anger Management**

As discussed in chapter 2, humor has several social functions, of which anger management is one. It would appear that, for George Carlin, who had such radically outspoken opinions about America, comedy was a way to express his anger towards the

world. Carlin found himself at times baffled about the ridiculousness of the American culture, as presented in the clips found in footnotes 1 until 3. As Kreienbock (2013) states: humor can be a ‘paradigmatic strategy of coping with the ridiculousness of human existence in a world where nothing fits properly’ (p. 111). Humor is a very effective way to deal with anger, but it is impressive how Carlin forced himself to look beyond his own anger and was able to turn it into a humorous message that educates as well as entertains.

### **A grammar of George Carlin’s humor**

From the results provided in chapter 4, together with the Carlin’s style of humor and comedy examined in the previous section, a grammar of humor could be made up. This grammar would be useful for those trying to copy Carlin’s act.

#### **Topic**

Looking at the topics George Carlin discusses, in order to fully copy his style, one should discuss worldly issues such as politics and religion rather than personal anecdotes. One must adhere to truths in order to tell one’s jokes convincingly. One also has to make sure that the content of one’s jokes is informative as well as entertaining. The jokes should critique the topics one discusses, so the application of satire is important.

#### **Type of humor**

For one to satisfactorily copy Carlin’s style of humor, one must adhere to the types of humor Carlin uses in his writings and stand-up monologues. This means that one must adhere to the superiority theory of humor, and thereby mainly use negative, aggressive humor directed at others. This humor must target one’s topics such as politicians or religious people. Also, one should make use of positive, enhancing humor when one discusses non-worldly issues such as the English language.

#### **Body language**

When trying to imitate George Carlin, one must also try to mimic his body language, for this shows a passion for the subjects one discusses as well as convey one's own personal beliefs on the subject. It is therefore important to support one's monologue with energetic hand gestures and not to stand still, but rather to move around the stage. Moreover, one should let one's eyes convey to the audience one's personal opinion on the subjects discussed. This does not have to mimic Carlin's eye movements as discussed in the previous section but rather adhere to one's own personality. It is also important to try to let one's own built-up energy, of for example anger, out through one's performance, for this will result in a more passionate monologue.

### **Figurative language**

When it comes to the linguistic content of one's writings or monologue, one should adhere to the amount of figures of speech, varieties of formulation, and metaphor Carlin uses in his own texts. The research results provided in chapter 4 of this thesis serve as an indication of how often of each type of figurative language should occur in one's own act. The definitions of each type of figurative language can be found in chapter 4.

Table 1 in chapter 4 shows that punning is not necessary when discussing subjects such as politics, religion, human behavior, or the English language in an ongoing monologue. However, punning should occur when one is writing up short thoughts about these subjects.

Table 2 in chapter 4 shows the amount of figures of speech Carlin has used in several of his writings. It shows that for every 2000 to 3000 words one writes, one should try to use approximately ten figures of speech. The figures of speech that should be most prominent are antithesis, euphemism, and hyperbole. It is also important to make use of irony, but to inform one's audience when one expresses an ironic thought.

Table 3 shows that Nash's proposed varieties of formulation can be very useful in the expression of short thoughts. They should be prominently represented. The most occurring

variety of formulation should be captions and annotations, followed by false premises and flawed inferences, and parodic allusions.

Lastly, in order to copy George Carlin properly, one should make prominent use of metaphor. Chapter 4 shows that Carlin provides his audience with numerous novel structural metaphors. Around 12,4 percent of all metaphors used in one's personal act should be structural, of which the most prominent source domain should be OBJECTS, PLANTS, and ANIMALS, and the most prominent target domain should be PEOPLE.

One should make even more prominent use of personification, a type of ontological metaphor. Table 4 shows that about 18 percent of all metaphors used should be ontological.

Finally, one should make extensive use of conventional metaphors. Table 4 shows that more than 60 percent of all metaphors must be conventional ones such as profanity, slang, phrasal verbs and phrases. Profanity should be used in more than half of the occurrences of conventional metaphor, followed by phrasal verbs. The two remaining types of conventional metaphor, slang and phrases, should both be used to a lesser extent.

Once one has applied all the above-mentioned guidelines to one's own writing, one should be able to reach a comedy standard of Carlinesque quality.

### **Carlin's influence on other comedians**

If George Carlin can influence such a thing as an important Supreme Court ruling, it follows that he has had impact on other parts and members of society. It is important to recognize that these influences are still at play today. This section discusses the influence he may have had on Australian comedian Jim Jefferies, even though this has never been officially stated. The reason for the inclusion of the discussion of this comedian in comparison to Carlin is that Jefferies explores certain topics in his shows that Carlin started rebelling against in the 1960s and 70s. The similarity in Jefferies' attitude towards certain topics in relation to George Carlin is too evident to ignore.

## Jim Jefferies

The topic that gained Jefferies a significant rise in success is gun control in America<sup>4</sup>. This topic must have seemed incredibly relevant to Jefferies, as ‘mass shootings have become commonplace across America’ (Decider.com). Carlin himself would fully agree with what Jefferies has to say about the subject, for he himself had strong opinion about guns (“And now they’re thinking about banning toys guns, AND THEY’RE GONNA KEEP THE FUCKING REAL ONES!”<sup>5</sup>). In his sketch on gun control, Jefferies states that he doesn’t ‘like guns’ and that instead of denying his American audience the right to have guns, he is just going to state some ‘facts’:

In Australia we had guns, yeah, right up until 1996 when Australia had the biggest massacre on earth – still hasn’t been beaten – and... Now after that they banned the guns. Now in the ten years before Port Arthur, there were ten massacres, since the gun ban in 1996 there hasn’t been a single massacre since... I don’t know how or why this happened... Uh, maybe it was a coincidence, alright? [...] In Australia we had the biggest massacre on earth and the government went: “THAT’S IT! NO MORE GUNS!” and we all went: “Yeah alright then, that seems fair enough really...” Now in America you had the Sandy Hook massacre where little tiny children died and your government went: “Maybe... We’ll get rid of the big guns?” and fifty percent of you went: “FUCK YOU! DON’T TAKE MY GUNS!” [...] But don’t give me this other bullshit. The main one is: “I need it for protection. I need to protect me, I need to protect my family” Really? Is that why they’re called assault rifles, is it? Never heard of these fucking protection rifles you speak of?

---

<sup>4</sup> Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0rR9IaXH1M0> Part 2:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9UFyNy-rw4>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUaL5vIYLh4>

Another favorite topic that comes up in Jefferies special *Freedumb* (2016) is American politics. In this show, Jefferies discusses ISIS and the upcoming presidential elections. He especially talks about presidential candidate Donald Trump<sup>6</sup> and wonders how ‘crazy we can get’ (Decider.com):

So anyway, Donald Trump, don’t get me wrong, he’s a lot of fun. And there’s a small bit of me, a little bit of me that thinks: “Fuck it, let’s do it! Let’s do it and see how fucking crazy shit can get!” [...] If you’ve ever said the sentence: “I like him because he’s a straight talker,” you’re as dumb as shit.

The way that Jefferies discusses Trump mimics Carlin when he discussed Bush and many other previous Republican American presidents<sup>7</sup>.

It is because of topics such as these that Jefferies’ act has been called Carlinesque. Both comedians discuss American politics and American laws. In the sketches discussed above, Jefferies makes use of negative humor directed at others. His gun monologue ridicules gun owners and enhances the people opposing America’s gun laws. Jefferies also applies this type of humor when talking about Trump. He ridicules him, and thereby enhances all people opposed to him.

Even though Jefferies himself has never publicly stated Carlin as an influence, it would be a mistake to overlook the probability. Further linguistic research should be conducted to conclude whether Jefferies adheres to all the guidelines of Carlin’s grammar of humor provided in the previous section.

Based on the discussion of Carlin’s influences on matters such as Supreme Court decisions and the probable influence on comedian Jim Jefferies, it is evident that humor and comedy are very influential. Humor and comedy can also be seen as educational, for many comedians discuss actual worldly issues and pose their own views that are to be taken

---

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e63cwYxZAxk>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r7LvUDCcNss>

seriously at times. Their opinions sometimes offer truths. The only problem comedy routines such as these pose is that these shows are generally watched by an audience that already shares the comedian's opinion. These are people that possess a level of intelligence that is needed to appreciate this comedy, and reflects the intelligence of the comedian. These people thus already agree with the comedian's opinions and are not in need of further education on the subject, although they stay for the entertainment and the affirmation that they are in the right.

## Chapter 4: The Figurative Language Researches

This chapter analyzes and discusses figurative aspects of George Carlin's language. Its aim is to highlight the figurative language Carlin uses in his works and to discuss whether it contributes to persuasiveness of his humor. Furthermore, this chapter will discuss and explore Nash's 'varieties of formulation', puns (as discussed by Nash (1985) and Attardo (1994)), several rhetorical features of language as explained in Corbett's *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, and metaphors as discussed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Finally, the results both researches will be discussed and related to the linguistic theories of humor discussed in chapter 2.

### Methodology

In the preface of his book *Brain Droppings* (1997), Carlin explains that he draws his stand-up material from three sources: the English language, the 'Little World' and the 'Big World' (p. 9). The Little World is what Carlin sees as the things we experience every day, such things as food and relationships. The Big World encompasses all the major (social) issues, such as war and politics, race and religion. In order to gain a clear overview of Carlin's language and to make a reliable comparison, texts were chosen from all three sources that Carlin draws his material from. From each source, texts of 2000 to 3000 words were selected. The chosen texts have been analyzed in both the figurative language research as well as the metaphor research.

#### The figurative language research

The texts that were researched from the three sources mentioned above did not provide many results in regards to the investigation towards puns and Nash's 'varieties of formulation'. For this reason, two other texts have been included in the research. These texts are called *Short Takes*, split into two parts, and they can be found in Carlin's book *Brain Droppings*. These texts are so called by Carlin because they largely consist of one-liners and

short pieces of text. These texts proved very fruitful in the research toward puns and the ‘varieties of formulation’. The *Short Takes* texts cannot be said to belong to any of the three sources Carlin draws his material from, since they contain thoughts about all three of them. Since the next section of this chapter deals only with the results of the research, the terms are explained below.

The results section starts with the analysis of puns in Carlin’s language as explained by Nash and Attardo. Attardo states that puns are ‘spoken jokes’ (p. 109), and that they are an ‘example of non-casual speech or exceptional language’ for in casual speech, the people conversing with one another are not ‘aware of the phonological structure of the utterance’ (p. 110). Furthermore, Attardo stresses the point that puns are ‘intentional’ (p. 113). He discusses six types of puns. Nash, discusses no less than twelve different types of puns. However, due to the fact that not every single word of every one of Carlin’s works was analyzed, it is understandable that examples of every single one of these puns were not found. Nash’s twelve types of puns and Attardo’s taxonomy of puns largely overlap. Both Nash and Attardo agree that half of all the puns there are revolve around homophony, homography, and paronymy. Homophonic puns are puns where ‘pairs of words [have] the same sounds but different meanings (Nash, 1985, p. 138). These puns also occur in an extended form called ‘homophonic phrases’ (p. 139). Homographic puns are puns where the words are ‘spelled the same’, but either sound different and/or have different meanings (Attardo, 1994, p. 110), and paronymic puns are puns where the ‘phonemic representations’ of the word pairs are ‘similar’ (p. 111). The next section shows that the puns Carlin uses all revolve around these homonymic types of puns, with the exception of one. Nash describes this type of pun as a ‘bilingual pun,’ where a ‘foreign word is made to bear the sense of an English word’ (p. 145).

The next type of figurative language discussed in the results section is figures of speech as explained by Corbett’s *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*. Four types of

schemes of construction and five types of tropes were researched. The first scheme is *antithesis*. *Antithesis* features a ‘juxtaposition of contrasting ideas, often in parallel structure’ (Corbett, 1965, p. 430). The next scheme is *apposition*, which is the juxtaposition of two coordinate terms, the second of which ‘serves as an explanation of modification of the first’ (p. 432). The third scheme researched is *climax*, which is an ‘arrangement of words, phrases, or clauses in an order of increasing importance’ (p. 437). Lastly, *tricolon* was looked for in the texts. *Tricolon* is a figure of speech where a sentence is composed of three parts in which the three parts are ‘similar not only in structure but in length’ (p. 429).

The five tropes researched are *hyperbole*, *understatement*, *euphemism*, *periphrasis*, and *irony*. The reason that these specific tropes were researched is that rhetorical devices such as these are used for ‘persuasive purposes’ (Corbett, p. 20). An explanation of the different types of tropes is provided below.

*Hyperbole* is the use of ‘exaggerated terms for the purpose of emphasis or heightened effect’ (p. 444). While *euphemism* is a trope that entails an ‘innocuous word or expression used in place of one that may be found offensive or suggest something unpleasant’, an *understatement* happens when a form of speech or disclosure is used which ‘contains an expression of lesser strength than what would be expected’ (Wikipedia). These three terms correspond to the terms *auxesis* (a heightening) and its opposite *meiosis* (a lessening). They will be compared and contrasted in the chapter 5. The next trope researched is *periphrasis*. This is a ‘substitution of a descriptive word or phrase for a proper name or of a proper name for a quality associated with the name’ (p. 443). The last trope investigated in this chapter is *irony*, which is a word is used in such a way that a meaning ‘opposite to the literal meaning of the word’ is conveyed (p. 445).

The last types of figurative language researched are the ‘varieties of formulation’ that Nash introduces. Similar to the puns, Nash also lists twelve different varieties of formulation.

Only the varieties that were found in Carlin's works are discussed here: captions and annotations, glossed propositions, catchword forms, parodic allusions, false premises and flawed inferences, and rhymed forms. The first of the varieties investigated is captions and annotations. These are 'one-liners like cartoon captions, quaint conjectures, vexed questions, complaints, accusations, grouses, maxims, bywords, and pseudoproverbs' (Nash, 1985, p. 39-40). As will become clear, there are quite a lot to be found in Carlin's texts. Glossed propositions are one-line jokes which are followed by an 'explanatory comment' that often comes in the form of an insult. Catchword forms are a type of 'tag-joke in which the fixed element in the formula is a routine introductory word' such as *wanted* or *they call* (p. 44). Parodic allusions, on the other hand, are one-liners that 'wittily allude to some common saying or well-known piece of text' and where punning is quite frequent (p. 45). Some of the most interesting of these varieties are the false premises and flawed inferences. These are 'logic-boggling' one-liners that probe 'linguistic equivalence, ambiguities, and irregularities of semantic fit' (p. 47). There are also a fair few of these to be found in Carlin's texts. The last variety that was found in the texts is 'rhymed forms'. These are 'formulaic jokes' which take 'prosodic shape in a rhymed couplet or quatrain' (p. 50).

The next section lists the results of the research. Tables are included which accurately portray the findings.

### **The metaphor research**

The 'Conceptual Metaphor Theory' (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) states that metaphor is 'pervasive in everyday life' rather than just a 'device of poetic imagination' or a matter of 'extraordinary language' (p. 3). In essence, Lakoff and Johnson explain that nobody is capable of speaking non-metaphorical language only. CMT as a general theory is divided into two domains: the source domain, from which we 'draw metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain,' and the target domain, which is the conceptual

domain that is ‘understood this way’ (Kövecses, 2010, p. 4). CMT furthermore distinguishes between three categories of conceptual metaphor: structural metaphors, orientational metaphors, and ontological metaphors. The distinction between these three is easily explained. Structural metaphors are metaphors where speakers are able to understand a certain target through the structure of a certain source (Kövecses, p. 37), as in for instance “PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS” and “WORDS ARE WEAPONS”. Orientational metaphors make use of ‘basic human spatial orientations’ (p. 40) as their source domain, as in “HAPPY IS UP” and “BAD IS LEFT”. Lastly, ontological metaphors give ‘new ontological status to general categories of abstract target domains’ so that we speak of our experiences in terms of ‘objects, substances, and containers’ (p. 38). Personification is also part of the ontological metaphor. Personification happens when ‘human qualities are given to nonhuman entities’ (Kövecses, p. 39).

For the metaphorical analysis, three dictionaries were used: Merriam-Webster online, the online Macmillan dictionary, and the Urban Dictionary. Merriam-Webster online formed the basis of the dictionary searches since this is an American dictionary and George Carlin was an American as well. The online Macmillan dictionary was used as a controlling dictionary in case Merriam-Webster was unclear. Furthermore, the Urban Dictionary was used for the lexical units that were not represented in the other two dictionaries. The reason for this, as will become clear in the results section, is that George Carlin uses an astonishing amount of profanity and slang in his work. Many of these words are simply not in either Merriam-Webster or Macmillan. For each potentially metaphorical lexical unit identified in the texts, the first definition in either one of the dictionaries was seen as the basic meaning.

In the establishing of the separate lexical units, compounds were regarded as being one word. This also counted for the phrasal verbs that were found. As will become clear further on, Carlin has made use of several phrases in his writings. These phrases have been regarded

as one metaphorical unit. Moreover, these phrases are seen as entrenched, or conventional, metaphors. The same counts for all the profanity and slang words Carlin makes use of. All of these have been regarded as being conventional.

## Results

This section lists all the results of both researches. All of the findings are portrayed in tables. All the linguistic representations of the puns, figures of speech and varieties of formulation can be found in Appendix A. The linguistic representations of the metaphors can be found in Appendix B.

### Puns

The table below gives an overview of the different types of puns found in Carlin's texts.

**Table 1. Puns**

Type of pun/source	Big World	Little World	English Language	Short Takes 1	Short Takes 2	Total
Homophonic puns	-	-	-	-	1	<b>1</b>
Homonymic/homographic puns	-	-	-	1	3	<b>4</b>
Bilingual puns	-	-	-	1	-	<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>	-	-	-	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>

The table above shows the division of puns in Carlin's texts. As the table shows, the few puns that exist in Carlin's language only occur in his *Short Takes*. This might be because these texts consist of short pieces of text, often single sentences, in which a clear point is made. The points made are deliberate, just as puns are. The homophonic pun Carlin provides is:

(1) My back hurts; I think I over-schlepped.

This pun is clearly homophonic since *schlepped* sounds like *slept*. The joke is ambiguous in the sense that both oversleeping and over-schlepping can cause a sore back.

An example of a homonymic or homographic pun is provided in example (2):

(2) My watch stopped. I think I'm down a quartz.

This pun plays with the two definitions of the word *quartz*; on the one hand 'a mineral that is often found in the form of a hard crystal and that is used especially to make clocks and watches' (Merriam-Webster) and on the other hand the brand name of an actual watch manufacturer.

The fact that the research resulted in one example of a bilingual pun is surprising, because Carlin does not usually interest himself in other languages than English. It is listed in example (3) below:

(3) The *mai tai* got its name when two Polynesian alcoholics got in a fight over some neckwear.

All in all, it appears that puns do not form a major part of George Carlin's language.

### Figures of Speech

The figures of speech as explained by Corbett are almost all found in the texts from the three other sources: the Big World, the Little World, and the English Language, as the table below shows.

**Table 2. Figures of speech**

Figures of speech/ sources	Big World	Little World	English Language	Short Takes 1	Short Takes 2	Total
Antithesis	-	2	-	2	6	<b>10</b>
Apposition	1	-	-	-	-	<b>1</b>
Hyperbole	3	3	-	-	-	<b>6</b>
Understatement	-	1	-	-	-	<b>1</b>

Euphemism	1	3	7	1	-	<b>12</b>
Climax	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tricolon	1	-	-	-	-	<b>1</b>
Periphrasis	-	4	1	-	-	<b>5</b>
Irony	1	-	-	-	1	<b>2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>38</b>

Table 2 shows that the figures of speech are mostly occur in the texts about the Little World.

The rest of the sources are somewhat underrepresented.

*Antithesis* is the second most represented figure of speech in all of the sources. A few examples are listed below:

(4) Regarding the fitness craze: America has lost its soul; now it's trying to save its body.

(5) Warm in the house, cold in the refrigerator.

*Apposition* occurs only once This single occurrence was found in a Big World text:

(6) America. Chronic fatigue and anorexia.

With this apposition, Carlin tries to explain each part in terms of the other.

*Hyperbole* was difficult to research because Carlin does not often give the impression that he does not really mean what he says in regards to exaggeration. However, six instances of hyperbole presented themselves. A few examples are given below:

(7) Y'ever get stuck behind a guy whose turn signal has been on for about *eighty miles?*

(8) Meanwhile the thing, whatever it is, is growing smaller and denser and has become *permanently* fused to the refrigerator shelf.

It was not surprising that just a single occurrence of *understatement* in the texts, since Carlin presents himself as someone who speaks reality, not as someone who will phrase

something with less strength than possible. The one example that was found is not a clear-cut case of an understatement, either:

(9) Some shit-stain who just had his headlights aimed and *wants you to see what a wonderful job his mechanic did?*

The only element that keeps this sentence in the running for having a probable understatement in it is the part in italics. Carlin obviously meant something far worse and ruder than that.

On the other hand, *euphemism* is fairly well represented. In fact, it is the most occurring trope in Carlin's texts. This is no wonder, for Carlin is famous for his take on euphemisms. In *Brain Droppings*, Carlin explains that he 'does not like euphemisms' (p. 171). He calls euphemisms 'simply descriptive lying' and 'a form of lying' (p. 171), for they 'obscure meaning' and 'shade the truth' (p. 568). Carlin lists quite a few euphemisms in each of his books and stand-up shows. However, he rarely uses euphemisms in his own texts other than listing them:

(10) But it's all right, folks, because thanks to our fear of death, no one has to die; they can all just *pass away*. Or *expire*, like a magazine subscription. If it happens in the hospital, it will be called a *terminal episode*. The insurance company will refer to it as *negative patient-care outcome*. And if it's the result of malpractice, they'll say it was a *therapeutic misadventure*.

From this piece of text it becomes clear that Carlin opposes this kind of language. He finds that it is better to get face-to-face with reality instead of hiding behind your language.

No *climaxes* were found in any of the texts, so a comparison between *climax* and *tricolon* was impossible to make. However, one occurrence of *tricolon* was found:

(11) Help the children, save the children, protect the children.

Again, as with *understatement*, this one occurrence does not provide a solid example. In fact, it is rather feeble, for in the last part, the verb consists of two syllables instead of one. In order

to be a true tricolon, all three parts must be identical in length. It is evident that these schemes do not form a major part of George Carlin's language.

*Periphrasis* was expected to be found numerous times, for Carlin is known for colorful and descriptive language. Five of them were found. Below are two examples:

(12) I'm not about to fuck with a ghost car; let someone else flag down the *Flying Dutchman*, it's not my job.

(13) I am *Curious George*.

In example (12), Carlin was talking about a very short woman who drives a car so that, from behind, only her hands on the steering wheel would be visible. Example (13) could possibly also be seen as a pun. It was put down as *periphrasis* because the attributes of a *Curious George* are extremely well known.

The last trope that was researched is *irony*. This trope proved to be fairly easy to research, since Carlin signals his ironic passages by telling his reader he is about to read something ironic:

(14) It's way beyond ironic that a place called the Holy Land is the location of the fiercest, most deeply felt hatred in the world. And it makes for wonderful theater.

### Varieties of Formulation

The last type figurative language researched were Nash' varieties of formulation. The table below portrays the findings.

**Table 3. Varieties of Formulation**

Varieties/sources	Big World	Little World	English Language	Short Takes 1	Short Takes 2	Total
Captions and Annotations	-	-	-	28	27	<b>55</b>
Catchword forms	-	-	-	-	1	<b>1</b>

Glossed propositions	-	-	-	3	1	4
Parodic allusions	-	-	-	6	7	13
False premises and flawed inferences	-	-	-	6	7	13
Rhymed forms	-	-	-	-	2	2
<b>Total</b>	-	-	-	<b>43</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>88</b>

As the table shows, all of the varieties were only found in the *Short Takes* texts. This comes as no surprise, as all of the varieties consist of one-liners, which are not expected to be found in larger pieces of prose texts.

As explained in the previous section, there are nine different types of captions and annotations, the most heavily represented in Carlin's texts being quaint conjectures, vexed questions, maxims, and pseudoproverbs. The captions and annotations variety is the variety that occurs most throughout both *Short Takes* texts. Some examples are listed below:

- (15) When a lion escapes from a circus in Africa, how do they know when they've caught the right one?
- (16) Shouldn't a complimentary beverage tell you what a fine person you are?
- (17) Imagine how thick Japanese people's photo albums must be.
- (18) When the going gets tough, the tough get fucked.
- (19) I'll bet there aren't too many people hooked on crack who can play the bagpipes.
- (20) I wanted to get a job as a gynecologist, but I couldn't find an opening.

While all of these are funny, they also make you think. This seems to be the purpose of the text. The questions Carlin poses are often rhetorical. Rhetorical questions are questions that are posed 'for the purpose of asserting or denying something obliquely' (Corbett, p. 445).

Moreover, rhetorical questions are an 'effective persuasive device' for they subtly influence

the kind of response ‘one wants to get from an audience’ (p. 445). This could be the reason that Carlin poses them.

The next variety is that of the catchword forms. Only one example of this variety was found:

(21) You know you’re getting old when you begin to leave the same smell in the bathroom your parents did.

A probable answer as to why Carlin does not makes much use of this variety is that Carlin is not a standard comedian who introduces his jokes in a standard way.

Four occurrences of glossed propositions were found; three in *Short Takes Part 1*, and one in *Short Takes Part 2*.

(22) The symphony orchestra had played poorly, so the conductor was in a bad mood. That night he beat his wife – because the music hadn’t been beautiful enough.

(23) The other night I ate at a real nice family restaurant. Every table had an argument going.

(24) I’d hate to be an alcoholic with Alzheimer’s; imagine needing a drink and forgetting where you put it.

George Carlin likes explaining his thoughts and opinions, and he does it quite a lot throughout his texts, but apparently not so much in the form of glossed propositions.

The parodic allusions were quite evenly divided among both *Part 1* and *2* of the *Short Takes* texts. Some examples are presented below:

(25) I don’t have an ax to grind, but I do have an ivory letter opener that could use sharpening.

(26) If the shoe fits, get another one just like it.

It was expected that there would be a number of parodic allusions, because Carlin has a certain way of playing with words and taking old or archaic notions and making them seem

funny, which is true for all the parodic allusions he provides in his texts.

The even division also counts for the next variety of formulation that was researched: the one of the false premises and flawed inferences. An example is listed below:

(27) The safest place during an earthquake would be in a stationary store.

Example (27) is based on the ambiguity of the word *stationary*. On the one hand, a stationary store provides things as paper, pens, and notebooks. On the other hand, stationary means ‘to stay in one place or position’ (Merriam-Webster), which obviously no store can sell, although it is a preferred position to be in while an Earthquake is happening.

The last of the varieties that was found is the variety of rhymed forms. There were two examples to be found, one of which is provided below:

(28) Don’t get your cortex caught in a vortex.

That there were any rhymed forms to be found is quite surprising, for Carlin, other than his poem *Modern Man*, found on pages 563 until 568 of his book *When Will Jesus Bring the Prokchops?*, does not provide any form of poetry.

It is evident that although the research provided fairly few results, it would be logical to assume that in the entire collected works of George Carlin, these, and other figures of speech would be more heavily represented.

## **Metaphors**

Overall, 161 metaphorical units were found in the texts, which comprised a total of approximately 7800 words. The texts about the Big World, consisting of approximately 2535 words, contained 76 metaphorical units. The texts about the Little World, consisting of approximately 2665 words, contained 51 metaphorical units. Finally, the texts about the English Language, which consisted of approximately 2600 words, contained 34 metaphorical units. Table 4 below shows the division of the different kinds of metaphor across the three different sources.

**Table 4. General Overview**

Type of metaphor/ source	The Big World	The Little World	The English Language	<b>Total</b>
Structural	9	8	3	<b>20</b>
Orientational	2	-	-	<b>2</b>
Ontological (incl. Personification)	15	5	9	<b>29</b>
Metonymy	5	1	-	<b>6</b>
Direct	-	2	1	<b>3</b>
Others (incl. profanity, slang etc.)	45	35	21	<b>101</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>161</b>

### Structural Metaphors

The structural metaphors make up 12,4 percent of all the metaphorical units that were found in George Carlin's texts. They come from ten different source domains, of which the most prominent are OBJECTS, as in WORDS ARE OBJECTS, PLANTS, as in PEOPLE ARE PLANTS and ANIMALS, as in PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS. Seven different target domains were found, the most prominent of which are PEOPLE (featured 11 times) and WORDS (featured three times). From this, one can already conclude that George Carlin's main interests are people in general and language. Table 5 below shows the division of the three most prominent source domains across the three sources.

**Table 5. Division of OBJECT, PLANT, and ANIMAL source domains**

<i>Source domain</i>	The Big World	The Little World	The English Language	<b>Total</b>
OBJECTS	-	2	2	<b>4</b>
PLANTS	3	-	-	<b>3</b>
ANIMALS	-	3	-	<b>3</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>

As is evident, not every prominent source domain is represented in each of the three sources.

However, the reason they are still the most prominent ones is because they appear most throughout the writings of George Carlin that were analyzed. It is of course to be expected

that the structural metaphors PEOPLE ARE PLANTS and PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS do not occur in the texts about the English Language, for the simple fact that they do not refer to people as much as the other two sources do. The most prominent structural metaphor that was found in these texts is WORDS ARE OBJECTS. In fact, all structural metaphors in the English Language texts feature WORDS as their target domain.

As already stated above, for more than half of the structural metaphors, the target domain was PEOPLE. This came to no surprise as in many of his writings and stand-up shows, Carlin expresses his views on what he believes is wrong with people, either individually, in general, or specific groups of them.

There were a few remarkable instances of structural metaphor that were hard to pin down. These were classified as being novel structural metaphors. A few examples are listed below.

(28) Today's kids are way too **soft**.

(29) One day you can clean out a hundred old, dead moths and then put the clean **globe** back on, and a month later there'll be another twenty or thirty full-grown dead moths inside the **globe**.

Example (28) shows the novel metaphor PERSONALITIES ARE FABRICS. The children might be soft to the touch, but that is not what Carlin was aiming at when he wrote this. He meant to make a comment about their personality. On the other hand, example (29) shows the linguistic realization of the novel metaphor SPHERICAL OBJECTS ARE PLANETS. The fact that George Carlin can make up novel structural metaphors proves that he was a creative writer, for it takes a creative person to 'produce novel linguistic metaphors based on conventional conceptual metaphors' (Kövecses, 2010, p. 35).

### **Ontological Metaphors (incl. Personification and Metonymy)**

As can be seen in Table 4, there are 29 instances of ontological metaphor to be found in the texts that were analyzed. This number includes the instances of personification. In fact, there are only three instances of true ontological metaphors such as STATES ARE LOCATIONS as shown in example (30) below:

(30) Of course you're depressed; you live in a **neon sewer**.

The other 26 instances of ontological metaphor that were found were all personifications. It is for this reason that this section shall focus mainly on personification and metonymy.

Personifications are metaphors that ascribe 'human qualities' to nonhuman entities (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 35). This type of metaphor covers a 'very wide range of metaphors' for they can each pick out 'different aspects of a person or ways of looking at a person' (p. 34). With this wide range of possibility, it should come to no surprise that personification is extensively used in Carlin's texts. He uses personification to describe corporations, diseases, questions, and profanity, and much more:

(31) Not to mention all the middle-class normal who swear things are just fine but spend three hours a day commuting, and whose dull, meaningless lives are being stolen from them by **soulless corporations**.

(32) Years ago, a **nice**, horrifying, fatal consumptive disease would come along and completely **eat** your fuckin' organs away.

(33) The last thing they need is for you to stop, get out of your car, go over to the wreckage and start bothering them with **stupid questions**.

(34) Another bunch of **ignorant bullshit** about your children: school uniforms.

It seems that through personification, George Carlin wishes to emphasize the points he makes. Personification forms a way to make his message more understandable.

### **Oriental Metaphors**

Table 4 shows that there are only two instances of orientational metaphors in the entirety of texts that were analyzed. Both occur in the texts about the Big World. As neither of these metaphorical units are novel nor provide interesting insights into George Carlin's language, they will not be discussed further.

### **Direct Metaphors**

For the analysis of the direct metaphors, certain aspects of MIPVU method were used. MIPVU has 'extended MIP to be able to take other manifestations of metaphor in discourse on board' (Dorst, 2011). Dorst explains that in MIPVU, a distinction is made between direct and indirect metaphors. In the case of direct metaphors, there is a 'lexical signal' that often occurs together with the 'directly expressed metaphors'. This signal often takes the form of the word 'like', as can be seen below:

(35) YOU DRIVE **LIKE** OLD PEOPLE FUCK!

(36) It's probably in Bumfuk, Egypt, the owner is from Rwanda and the food tastes **like** something the Hutus would feed to the Tutsis.

As Dorst mentions, the direct metaphors take the form of 'similes and figurative comparisons'. She also states that the use of direct metaphors is 'relatively more frequent and important' in fictional texts. As we can see from examples (35) and (36), this is also the case in George Carlin's works. All of the direct metaphors serve as fictional examples in his texts. It comes to no surprise that there are not more than three direct metaphors since George Carlin was not a writer of fiction.

### **Conventional Metaphors**

The last type of metaphors to be discussed can all be categorized as entrenched and conventional metaphors. Conventional metaphorical expressions are 'commonplace'. They are 'so mundane and commonly heard' that it is sometimes hard to see them as metaphorical

expressions at all (Kövecses, 2010, preface). Kövecses goes even so far as to call them ‘dead metaphors’. The use of many curse words, slang words, phrasal verbs and phrases goes by practically unnoticed due to the fact that we are so used to hearing them. It is therefore they are discussed together. In the table below represents a division of the conventional metaphors that were found.

**Table 6. Division of Conventional Metaphors**

<i>Type</i>	The Big World	The Little World	The English Language	<b>Total</b>
Profanity	29	16	12	<b>57</b>
Slang	4	1	3	<b>8</b>
Phrasal verbs	9	15	4	<b>28</b>
Phrases	3	3	2	<b>8</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>101</b>

As was already clear from Table 4, these conventional metaphors are most numerous in Carlin’s language. There are 101 in total, which means that this category makes up almost 63 percent of all the metaphors together.

It is easily spotted that the metaphors of the type ‘profanity’ are most prominent in this category. These metaphors often include the word *fuck* and *bullshit*, which prove to be a substitute for word categories such as ‘noun,’ ‘verb’ and ‘adjective’:

(37) My attitude is **fuck** sick people and **fuck** a dead person.

(38) That way I can turn the **fuckin’** thing off.

(39) Another bunch of ignorant **bullshit** about your children: school uniforms.

*Shit* is a similar favorite swearword. In Carlin’s sentences, it mostly takes up the role as ‘noun’:

(16) I’m tired of this **shit** being presented in the context of real news.

In the texts I analyzed, eight occurrences of slang were found, for many of which the Urban Dictionary was used to find their definition, since these words were nowhere to be found in

either the Merriam-Webster online dictionary or the Macmillan online dictionary. Examples of these are:

(17) Any time marketers add a *y* to the name of a food, you can be sure they're yanking your **schwantz**.

(18) And these comments are directed at all you environmental **jackoffs** out there.

(19) Now, one last reminder before I tow this trusty little **shit-box** of mine into the shop for its bimonthly overhaul.

For the slang words that could also be regarded as profanity, it was decided that they were truly slang if they only occurred in the Urban Dictionary and not in the other two dictionaries, since Merriam-Webster and Macmillan do have entries for words such as *shit* and *fuck*.

The last subject to be discussed is the analysis of the phrasal verbs and phrases. As explained above, these metaphorical units have been regarded as conventional because of the frequency of use. As in the case of the slang words, many can be regarded as being profane as well. The only distinction between the phrases and phrasal verbs in regards to the curse words is that the former consist of more than one lexical unit. Some examples of phrasal verbs and phrases that could be classified as profanity as well are listed below:

(20) Another **pain in the ass** you don't want to get behind is anyone who drives real sss-l-l-l-l-o-o-o-ww.

(21) Who wants to get **sucked off** by a forty-three-year-old clergyman with beard stubble?

The use of profanity and slang is one of the most prominent characteristics of all of George Carlin's works, as this is part of what he has become so particularly famous for: the sketch of the "Seven Words You Can Never Say on Television". Carlin was arrested for the performance of this sketch because it violated obscenity laws. The use of profanity serves to emphasize his anger as well as the apparent ridiculousness of the subjects he discusses. All

the profanity and slang Carlin uses add to the persuasiveness of his writings. The profanity and slang add to the realistic element of his works, for whenever we want to get a certain point across, we tend to emphasize it with harsh words to make sure it is not forgotten. This counts for the use of potential offensive phrasal verbs and phrases as well.

## Discussion

The first part of the results section listed Carlin's use of puns, figures of speech and Nash' varieties of formulation. The results showed that while Carlin does indeed make use of all of them, some are more heavily represented than others.

*Table 1* portrayed Carlin's minimal use of puns in his writings. This is quite surprising, since one would have expect Carlin to put his language abilities to work to show how ingenious the English language can be. The one remarkable outcome of this part of the research is that Carlin makes use of bilingual puns. This element is remarkable since Carlin did not show any interest towards other languages. On the whole, since puns form such a little part of his repertoire, it can be concluded that punning was not a major part of Carlin's uses for persuasion.

The figures of speech are more heavily represented in Carlin's writings. There are 38 in total to be found in the analyzed texts. The source that harbored most of all the figures of speech was the Little World. It seems that the figures of speech Carlin was most fond of are *antithesis*, and *euphemism*. The contrast between the amount of *auxesis* and *meiosis* in Carlin's texts is quite apparent. Although there are 13 instances of *meiosis* (*understatement* and *euphemism*), there are only six instances of *auxesis* (*hyperbole*). This shows that even though Carlin uses both of these tropes, he did not feel the need for an abundance of *auxesis*. This could be explained by the fact that Carlin did not feel the need to exaggerate his views, for Carlin used different methods to persuade his audience.

Nash' varieties of formulation could only be found in the *Short Takes* texts, and even though only six of Nash' original twelve varieties were found, they are the most heavily represented elements of Carlin's language apart from metaphor. This means that George Carlin relied quite heavily on them. The varieties of formulation add to the persuasiveness of Carlin's message. By not stating explicitly what he meant but rather hinting at the true meaning, Carlin makes his audience think about the subjects he discusses. This could be part of what made Carlin such a popular comedian. He was able to separate the serious from the trivial, which makes his act enjoyable for everyone.

The last part of the previous section portrayed the results of the metaphor research. It showed that, in contrast to the figures of speech, the most metaphors were found in the texts about the Big World. In order to get his message across, he needed to be persuasive when writing about the issues from the Big World, and metaphorical language has helped him achieve his goal. The types of metaphor that were most prominent were the conventional and ontological metaphors. It seems that, in Carlin's case, the topics that invoke more prominent use of metaphors are worldly issues such as politics and religion.

The structural metaphors make up 12,4 percent of Carlin's use of metaphors. Even though more of them were expected, the twenty that were found provide some interesting insights as to Carlin's interests and creative abilities. To start with, the two target domains that Carlin's structural metaphors include most are PEOPLE and WORDS. This shows that Carlin's main interests were people in general, their behavior, and their use of language. Moreover, the research showed that Carlin was a creative person, for he has provided his audience with numerous novel structural metaphors in his texts.

The results section on metaphors also showed that Carlin makes extensive use of personification. In fact, almost ninety percent of all ontological metaphors are instances of this particular type of metaphor. It seems that personification was a method for Carlin to

emphasize his views, and to make them more relatable and understandable. Metonymy also occurs a number of times throughout Carlin's texts. It is interesting to see that almost all of them can also be seen as profanity.

Conventional metaphors, especially the many instances of profanity, are the most heavily represented type of metaphor throughout Carlin's texts. In fact, more than 35 percent of all metaphors found in the texts are profane. The linguistic representations of the metaphors in Appendix B show that favorite swearwords are *shit* and *fuck*. Aside from the fact that an increased use of swearwords is a sign of a higher intelligence (Hunter, *Independent*), the huge amount of profanity is a way for Carlin to show his passion for a certain subject. The profanity he uses emphasizes his feelings and therefore adds persuasiveness to his words. Moreover, the use of profane words makes the message more memorable.

In contrast to the structural metaphors, none of the conventional metaphors found in Carlin's texts could be classified as being novel. While it is expected of comedians to introduce their audiences to novel metaphors, it seems that Carlin did not feel the need to invent new swearwords to further persuade his audience of his messages. Conventional swearwords such as *fuck* and *shit* appear to sufficiently express Carlin's opinion.

All in all, Carlin's use of puns, figures of speech, varieties of formulation, and metaphors contribute to the humor and persuasiveness of Carlin's writings. His messages would be rather flat and dry were they not to include these ornamental structures.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

In order for Carlin's message to be grasped, his audience needs to have a certain linguistic competence and level of intelligence. As comedians are bound to do, Carlin touches many subjects that make people uncomfortable. In doing so, he utilizes both aspects of Nash's 'joke design': the method of extended narration and the construction of witticisms in formulaic patterns. As to the likelihood factor, Carlin's jokes do not usually require the acceptance of some absurd proposition, since his formulation of his views may be slightly exaggerated but not altogether untrue. Carlin does not really detach his audience from reality for he adheres to (his own) truth. Moreover, unlike Nash's beliefs that understatement and overstatement are important factors in humorous texts, the research results from chapter 4 show that Carlin did not rely heavily on these figures of speech.

Of Attardo's three-way classification of modern theories of humor, it is the incongruity and hostility and disparagement theories that best explain Carlin's style of humor. He uses both referential and verbal jokes as well as register humor, mainly when showing off his inexhaustible knowledge of various swearwords. Carlin's comedy can be seen as conversational rather than canned, for he connects his monologue by themes.

When comparing George Carlin's style of comedy with the theories proposed by Nash and Attardo, it can be concluded that while Carlin was a comedian in every sense of the word, the word 'typical' does not do him justice. Carlin deviates from almost all of Nash's attributes that make up written humorous texts. George Carlin was a comedian, but just like his opinions, his character deviates from the norm.

Chapter 2 also listed the characteristics of typical American humor. Although the various sources that were used do not all agree with one another, they do help in answering the question whether Carlin was a typical American comedian. Mintz stated that American

humor is defined by negativism and aggressive wit. Moreover, it is anti-optimistic, anti-progressive and anti-democratic. Carlin's humor exhibits many of these traits, except for anti-progressivism. It is not likely that Carlin was anti-progressive, for he never leads his audience to believe he thinks change is bad or impossible.

Limon stated that American humor exhibits opposing characteristics. Although Carlin does not adhere to Limon's opposing characteristics, he does exhibit a likable charm while never ceasing from being realistic. Carlin uses his humor as a means to truth, and in doing so, he exposes his audience to constructive liberal satire.

Although Carlin does adhere to Hill's elements of native American humor in his high regard for common sense and self-reliance, he does not adhere to his take on modern humor. In Hill's eyes, Carlin would be a native humor protagonist because he is not neurotic and he accepts reality's ugliness and brutality.

Dudden would be of the opinion that Carlin was a prototypical comedian in the 1960s and 70s because of his anarchistic traits. In that period, comedians were part of the counterculture, and George Carlin was its spokesman.

Weber would probably also see Carlin as a true American comedian. According to him, American humor focuses on cultural tensions and resolutions. Although Carlin does not offer many resolutions to his culture's tensions, he does expand on them. Next to cultural tensions, he discusses social as well as linguistic ones.

The comparison between American and British humor shows that Carlin was not as typical an American comedian as the above views make him seem to be. Conversely, Carlin proves to be the opposite of a typical American comedian. The comparison stated that American humor does not make use of irony. As is evident from the research results, this is not true in the case of George Carlin. Also, American humor is supposed to stay within a certain 'green zone' of acceptable behavior. The fact that Carlin was arrested for the use of

profane words shows that his humor oversteps these boundaries. Moreover, it has been stated that American humor does not exhibit a lot of superiority humor. This type of humor is used in abundance by Carlin, especially when he talks of certain people he believes the world could do without. Carlin criticizes everything and everyone and thereby makes himself, and his audience, seem superior. Lastly, Carlin is not very American in his take on American taboos. Instead of leaving them be, he attacks them one by one and discusses each of them at length.

Chapter 3 of this thesis showed that there is such a thing as a grammar of humor for George Carlin. Moreover, this chapter provided this grammar. The grammar provided lists features of Carlin's personal style, the type of humor he uses and the amount of figurative language he uses in his writings. Other comedians wishing to copy Carlin's style of comedy and make their works as persuasive as Carlin's can make use of this grammar. The problem that presents itself here is that a prescriptive grammar such as this one would take all the desperately needed spontaneity and creativity out of the humor process. A grammar of humor defeats originality. Since every individual is different, it would be nearly impossible to be able to copy all of his manners of formulation, body language and facial expressions in order to reach the same amount of entertainment and persuasiveness. This should not be seen as a disadvantage. Every comedian should be their own person, conveying their own personal opinions in their own personal style. That is, after all, what makes every individual unique.

Chapter 4 provided the results from both researches. This chapter showed that figurative language does add to the persuasiveness of Carlin's message for it is the function of rhetorical devices to persuade an audience. Since Carlin uses many of such devices in his texts, their persuasiveness is thus enhanced. Moreover, the many metaphors, varieties of formulation, puns, schemes, and tropes make Carlin's works even more enjoyable, and most importantly, memorable, for if one ever wants to persuade others of something, it is vital that they remember the message.

One final question to be answered remains: Are Attardo's and Nash' theories adequate for the study of the language of stand-up comedy? While Attardo's SSTH solely explains that a written text is funny if the scripts contradict one another, Nash' more in-depth theories of the language of humor have proved to be more insightful when it comes to the study of humorous language. As is evident, many of his formulated puns and varieties of formulation occur in Carlin's texts.

Despite this apparent overlap, both Attardo and Nash have focused solely on the analysis of written texts rather than spoken ones. Since the spoken word differs from the written one in many ways such as style and register, future research should focus on updating the existing theories and to make them compatible with the study of the language of solely stand-up comedy.

References

*American humor*. (n.d.) Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American\\_humor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_humor)

Attardo, S. *Linguistic Theories of Humor*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994.

Bens, J. H. (1971). Taboo or Not Taboo. *College Composition and Communication*, 22(3), 215-220.

Bryant, S. (2010, March 1). Sullivan, James. 7 Dirty Words: The Life and Crimes of George Carlin. *The Library Journal*.

Carlin, G. (2006). *3x Carlin, An Orgy of George*. New York, NY: Hyperion.

College Tour, episode of September 16, 2016.

Corbett, E. (1965). *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Dorst, L. (2011). The Application of MIPVU to Fiction.

Dudden, A. P. (1985). American Humor. *American Quarterly*, 37(1), 7-12.

ENGLISH HUMOUR VS. AMERICAN HUMOR – IS THERE A DIFFERENCE? (2009, October 29). Retrieved from <http://www.lexiophiles.com/english/english-humour-vs-american-humor-is-there-a-difference>

Francis, L. (1994). Laughter, the Best Medication: Humor as Emotion Management in Interaction. *Symbolic Interaction*, 17(2), 147-163.

*George Carlin*. (n.d.) Retrieved from

<http://academic.eb.com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/levels/collegiate/article/474026>

*George Carlin*. (n.d.) Retrieved from <http://georgecarlin.com/biography/>

*George Carlin*. (n.d.) Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Carlin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Carlin)

Hamilton, S. (2007). *Essential Literary Terms: a Brief Norton Guide with Exercises*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Hill, H. (1963). Modern American Humor: The Janus Laugh. *College English*, 25(3), 170-176.

Hunter, J. (2016, August 5). Intelligent People Tend to Be More Messy, Stay Awake Longer, and Swear More. *Independent*. Retrieved from <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/intelligent-people-tend-to-be-messy-stay-awake-longer-and-swear-more-a7174256.html>

JIM JEFFERIES LETS 'FREEDUMB' RING UP HIS BIGGEST AUDIENCE YET. (2016, July 1). Retrieved from <http://decider.com/2016/07/01/jim-jefferies-freedumb-netflix/>

Karakus et al. (2014). The Relationship Between Types of Humor and Perceived Social Support among Adolescents. *Procedia*, 152, 1194-1200.

Kövecses, Z. (2010). *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kreienbock, J. (2013). *Malicious Objects, Anger Management, and the Question of Modern Literature*. New York: Fordam University Press.

Lakoff, G; Johnson, M (1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Limon, J. (2009). American Humor in History. *American Literary History*, 21(2), 306-315.

Looney, M. (2009). *Humor vs. Humour in 'The Office': The Necessary Adaptation of Television Humor from the British Market to the American Market* (Master's thesis).

Retrieved from Proquest Dissertations Publishing. (Accession No. 1519838)

Macmillan Dictionary online. Retrieved October 18, 2016 from

<http://www.macmillandictionary.com>.

Martin, R. A. (2007). *The Psychology of Humor: an Integrative Approach*. Burlington, MA: Elsevier Academic Press.

Merriam-Webster online. Retrieved October 18 2016, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com>.

*Michael McIntyre*. (n.d.) Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael\\_McIntyre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_McIntyre)

Mintz, L. E. (1977). American Humour and the Spirit of the Times. In A. J. Chapman & H. C.

Foot (Eds.), *It's a Funny Thing, Humour: Proceedings of the International Conference on Humour & Laughter* (17-21), Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Nash, W. *The Language of Humour: Style and Technique in Comic Discourse*. London and New York: Longman, 1985.

Nussbaum, J. (2009, December 29). Book World reviews George Carlin's 'Last Words'. *The Washington Post*.

*Of Thee I Sting!* (2012, December 7). Retrieved from

<http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2013/01/wolcott-american-humor>

Pegg, S. (2007, February 10). *What are You Laughing at?* Retrieved from

<http://www.theguardian.com/film/2007/feb/10/comedy.television>

*political satire*. (n.d.). Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political\\_satire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_satire)

Pragglejaz Group. (2007). MIP: A method for identifying metaphorically used words in

discourse. In: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. *Metaphor and symbol*, 22(1), 1 - 39.

Pulliam, G. J. (1991). Stock Lines, Boat-Acts, and Dickjokes: A Brief Annotated Glossary of

Standup Comedy Jargon. *American Speech*, 66(2), 164-170.

Seizer, S. (2011). On the Uses of Obscenity in Live Stand-Up Comedy. *Anthropological*

*Quarterly*, 84(1), 209-234.

*The 5 Functions of Humor*. (n.d.). Retrieved from [http://theunboundedspirit.com/the-5-](http://theunboundedspirit.com/the-5-functions-of-humor-psychology-of-humor/)

[functions-of-humor-psychology-of-humor/](http://theunboundedspirit.com/the-5-functions-of-humor-psychology-of-humor/)

The Urban Dictionary. Retrieved October 18, 2016 from <http://www.urbandictionary.com>

Weber, B. (1962). American Humor and American Culture. *American Quarterly*, 14(3), 503-

507.

*What are Some Cultural Taboos in America?* (n.d.) Retrieved from

[https://www.quora.com/What-are-some-cultural-taboos-in-the-United-States-of-](https://www.quora.com/What-are-some-cultural-taboos-in-the-United-States-of-America)

[America](https://www.quora.com/What-are-some-cultural-taboos-in-the-United-States-of-America)

Whitehead, C. & Selzer, L. (2008). New Eclecticism: An Interview with Colson Whitehead.

*Callaloo*, 31(2), 393-401.

Wood et al. (2011). 'Management humor: Asset or liability?' *Organizational Psychology*

*Review*, 1(4), 316-338.

## Appendix A: George Carlin's Figurative Language

### **Puns**

#### Short Takes Part 1

- The *mai tai* got its name when two Polynesian alcoholics got in a fight over some neckwear.
- Although the photographer and the art thief were close friends, neither had ever taken the other's picture.

#### Short Takes Part 2

- My watch stopped. I think I'm down a quartz.
- In Rome, the emperor sat in a special part of the Coliseum known as the Caesarian section.
- My back hurts; I think I over-schlepped
- Never tell a Spanish maid you want everything spic-and-span.

### **Schemes and Tropes**

#### *antithesis*

#### Short takes part 1

- Regarding the fitness craze: America has lost its soul; now it's trying to save its body.
- Auto racing: slow minds and fast cars.

#### Short Takes Part 2

- A tree: first you chop it down, then you chop it up.
- I once found a throw rug in a catch basin.
- We use the sun to make electricity, and then we use the electricity to operate sun lamps and tanning machines.
- *Prefix* has no suffix, but *suffix* has a prefix.

- It used to be, “ I have a gun, give me some money.” Now it’s, “ I have some money, give me a gun.”

- Mall walking. How perfect! Staying fit without having to take your eyes off the merchandise that got you out of shape in the first place.

### The Little World

- The writing on the light bulb is placed right where you can’t read it when the light is on, because the light is too bright. And then, when the light is off, you can’t read it, because there is not enough light.

- Warm in the house, cold in the refrigerator.

### *apposition*

### The Big World

- America. Chronic fatigue and anorexia.

### *hyperbole*

### The Big World

- It’s **medical arrogance**, and it works against nature’s plan

- It’s **emotional pandering**.

- And when they do, they admit they are simply unable and unwilling to report the totality of the **Great American Social Nightmare**.

### The Little World

- Y’ever get stuck behind a guy whose turn signal has been on for about **eighty miles**?

- And later you discover he was driving **around the world** – to the left!

- Meanwhile the thing, whatever it is, is growing smaller and denser and has become **permanently fused to the refrigerator shelf.**

*understatement*

The Little World

- Some shit-stain who just **had his headlights aimed and wants you to see what a wonderful job his mechanic did?**

*euphemism*

The Big World

- Exuberant cell growth. (cancer)

Short Takes Part 1

- Time sharing got a bad name, so now they call it “interval ownership”.

The Little World

- I’m just another guy, out, driving around looking for a **little fun.**

- I’m looking for a **little entertainment.**

- And off we go, out onto the highway looking for a **little fun.**

The English Language

- Of course, it’s been obvious for some time that there are no old people in this country. they all died, and what we have are “**senior citizens**”.

- But it’s all right, folks, because thanks to our fear of death, no one has to die; they can all just **pass away.** Or **expire**, like a magazine subscription. If it happens in the hospital, it will

be called a **terminal episode**. The insurance company will refer to it as **negative patient-care outcome**. And if it's the result of malpractice, they'll say it was a **therapeutic misadventure**.

- Well, perhaps "vomit" is too strong a word. It makes me want to engage in an **involuntary, personal protein spill**.

*tricolon*

### The Big World

- Help the children, save the children, protect the children.

*periphrasis*

### The Little World

- I'm not about to fuck with a ghost car; let someone else flag down the **Flying Dutchman**, it's not my job.

- Around our house, I'm known as **Icebox Man**

- I am **Curious George**.

- Look at that, **Sugarlips!**

### The English Language

- I was in a **Yuppie** joint last year where the cover of the noontime menu, instead of saying *menu*, actually had the words *lunch solutions*.

*irony*

### The Big World

- with all our supposed superiority in food production, we provide our people with far higher rates of stroke, heart attack, colon cancer, and other diet diseases than most "inferior" Third

World countries do. But don't you worry, those folks are catching up; social pathologies are our biggest export. And so, in a curious way, cancer turns out to be catching, after all.

### Short Takes Part 2

- It's way beyond ironic that a place called the Holy Land is the location of the fiercest, most deeply felt hatred in the world. And it makes for wonderful theater.

## **Varieties of Formulation**

*captions and annotations*

### Short takes part 1

- The wisest man I ever knew taught me something I never forgot, and although I never forgot it, I never quite memorized it either.

- I feel sorry for homeless gay people; they have no closet to come out of.

- I you mail a letter to the post office, who delivers it?

- I've never owned a telescope, but it's something I'm thinking of looking into.

- When the going gets tough, the tough get fucked.

- I was expelled from cooking school, and it left a bad taste in my mouth.

- I don't have to tell you it goes without saying there are some things better left unsaid, I think that speaks for itself.

- Do kings have sweatbands in their crowns?

- A courtesy bus driver once told me to go fuck myself.

- If you go to a bone bank, why can't you make a calcium deposit?

- I'll bet there aren't too many people hooked on crack who can play the bagpipes.

- How do primitive people know they're doing the dances correctly?

- The reason they call it the American Dream is because you have to be asleep to believe it.

- If you get cheated by the Better Business Bureau, who do you complain to?

- Intelligence tests are biased toward the literate.
- The carousel and Ferris wheel owners traveled in different circles so they rarely made the rounds together.
- Imagine how thick Japanese people's photo albums must be.
- Just because your penis surgery was not successful is no reason to go off half-cocked.
- Shouldn't a complimentary beverage tell you what a fine person you are?
- I buy stamps by mail, it works OK until I run out of stamps.
- I wanted to get a job as a gynecologist, but I couldn't find an opening.
- I always thought a semi-truck driver was someone who dropped out of truckdriving school halfway through the course.
- When a lion escapes from a circus in Africa, how do they know when they've caught the right one?
- Cancer research is a growth industry.
- With all that humping going on JFK's administration shouldn't have been called Camelot, they should have called it Come-a-lot.
- When the convention of testicle transplant surgeons had its annual softball game, they asked me to throw the first ball.
- You rarely meet a wino with a perfect pitch.

### Short Takes Part 2

- When a ghostwriter dies, how many people come back?
- The bigger they are, the worse they smell.
- A meltdown sounds like fun, like some kind of cheese sandwich. = PUN
- No one can ever know for sure what a deserted area looks like.

- The difference between show business and a gangbang is that in show business everybody wants to go on last.
- Is the kidney a bean-shaped organ, or is the bean a kidney-shaped legume?
- Why does *Filipino* start with an *F* and *Philippines* start with a *P*?
- Sometimes I don't recall my mental blocks, so I try not to think about it.
- If a painting can be forged well enough to fool experts, why is the original so valuable?
- A recent story in the media said that some firemen in Chicago had refused to enter a burning building because it was so hot.
- When will the rhetorical questions all end?
- Hard work is for people short on talent.
- How is it possible to be seated on a standing committee?
- I went to the Missing Persons' Bureau. No one was there.
- What year did Jesus think it was?
- Life is a near-death experience.
- If the bouncer gets drunk, who throws *him* out?
- If you mail a letter to your mailman, will he get it before he's supposed to?
- Why must hailstones always be the size of something else?
- Tomorrow is very much like today, except it's not here yet.
- A laugh is a smile with a hole in it.
- If a really stupid person becomes senile, how can you tell?
- Just when I began to find myself, depersonalization came in.
- When are they gonna come up with some new Christmas carols?
- How do they get all those Down's syndrome kids to look the same?
- One consolation about memory loss in old age is that you also forget a lot of things you didn't intend to remember in the first place.

- What clinic did Betty Ford go to?

*glossed propositions*

Short takes part 1

- The symphony orchestra had played poorly, so the conductor was in a bad mood. That night he beat his wife – because the music hadn't been beautiful enough.
- The other night I ate at a real nice family restaurant. Every table had an argument going.
- My family and I are doing our bit for the environment. We've volunteered to have sixty metric tons of human waste stored in our home.

Short Takes Part 2

- I'd hate to be an alcoholic with Alzheimer's; imagine needing a drink and forgetting where you put it.

*catchword forms*

Short Takes Part 2

- You know you're getting old when you begin to leave the same smell in the bathroom your parents did.

*parodic allusions*

Short Takes part 1

- If you love someone, set them free; if they come home, set them on fire
- I don't have an ax to grind, but I do have an ivory letter opener that could use sharpening.
- If the shoe fits, get another one just like it.
- There are nights when the wolves are silent, and only the moon howls.

- You can lead a gift horse to water in the middle of a stream, but you can't look him in the mouth and make him a drink.

- Blood is thicker than urine.

### Short Takes Part 2

- If it ain't broke, break it.

- I'm very lucky. The only time I was ever up shit creek, I just happened to have a paddle with me.

- If you can't beat them, arrange to have them beaten.

- I don't like to lose my bearings, so I keep them in the cabinet near my bed.

- Surf's down forever.

- Remember, in every silver lining there's a dark cloud.

- Always do whatever's next.

### *false premises and flawed inferences*

#### Short takes part 1

- I don't think we really gave barbarism a fair try.

- As soon as a person tells you they have a surprise for you, they have lost the element of surprise.

- The safest place during an earthquake would be in a stationary store.

- The older I get, the more certain I am that I will not have to spend the rest of my life in prison.

- I have a photograph of Judge Bork, but it doesn't do him justice.

- I thought it would be nice to get a job at a duty-free shop, but it doesn't sound like there's a whole lot to do in a place like that.

Short Takes Part 2

- I'm in favor of personal growth as long as it doesn't include malignant tumors.
- No one is ever completely alone; when all is said and done, you always have yourself.
- I was taken to the hospital for observation. I stayed several days, didn't observe anything, and left.
- A cemetery is a place where dead people live.
- Politics is so corrupt even the dishonest people get fucked.
- Our only hope is insane leadership.
- A deaf-mute carrying two large suitcases has rendered himself speechless.

*rhymed forms*

Short Takes Part 2

- Infant crib death is caused by grandparents' breath.
- Don't get your cortex caught in a vortex.

## Appendix B: George Carlin's Metaphors

**Structural metaphors***The Big World*

1. You're being **fed a large ration of other people's troubles** designed to keep your mind off the things that should really be bothering you. (IDEAS ARE FOOD)
2. And fuck the people who **battle** them [the odds]. (COMPETITION IS WAR)
3. And I also know that all of you boring single dads and working moms, who think you're such fuckin' **heroes**, aren't gonna like this, but somebody's gotta tell you for your own good. (PEOPLE ARE PEOPLE)
4. ...; you gotta stop overprotecting them, because you're making 'em too **soft**. (novel: CHARACTERS ARE FABRICS)
5. Today's kids are way too **soft**. (novel: CHARACTERS ARE FABRICS)
6. Nature should be permitted to do its job **weeding out** and killing off the weak and sickly and ignorant people, without interference from airbags and batting helmets. (PEOPLE ARE PLANTS)
7. And you'd be anxious and depressed too if you had to put up with pathetic, insecure, **yuppie parents** who enroll you in college before you've even figured out which side of the playpen smells the worst... (PEOPLE ARE PEOPLE)
8. Instead, what you do is kick him in the **nuts**. (PEOPLE ARE PLANTS)
9. You kick him squarely in the **nuts**, and you get the fuck out of there as fast as you can, and you go tell somebody right away. (PEOPLE ARE PLANTS)

*The Little World*

1. One day you can clean out a hundred old, dead moths and then put the clean **globe** back on, and a month later there'll be another twenty or thirty full-grown dead moths inside the **globe**. (novel: SPHERICAL OBJECTS ARE PLANETS)
2. At this point, folks, you are truly an **accident** waiting to happen. (novel: PEOPLE ARE ENTITIES)
3. An **insurance claim** in progress. (PEOPLE ARE OBJECTS)
4. Speakin' of behind you, don't you just love it when there's one of those guys on **your tail** whose *brights are on*? (PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS)
5. Slam on your brakes and let him **plow** right into you. (PEOPLE ARE MACHINES)
6. As you roll up to **the pack**, you have to decide which lane to get into. (novel: MACHINES ARE OBJECTS)
7. And, by all means, ignore the Lexus with the heavily made-up, bejeweled **pig-woman**. (PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS)
8. She has the reflexes of an **aging panda**. (PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS)

### *The English Language*

1. Euphemisms and politically correct speech have also **infiltrated** the food and restaurant business. (WORDS ARE WEAPONS)
2. Here's another word the advertising sluts have completely **wiped** their asses with. (WORDS ARE OBJECTS)
3. There's just no sense in having two conflicting stories **floating** around about the same dumb-ass traffic accident. (WORDS ARE OBJECTS)

### **Oriental metaphors**

#### *The Big World*

1. People overcoming long odds? (UNLIKELYHOOD IS MORE)
2. I'd prefer to hear something like that once in a while, rather than this pseudo-inspirational bullshit that the media feel they have to feed us in order to keep our minds off **America's decline**. (FAILURE IS DOWN)

### **Ontological metaphors (incl. Personification)**

#### *The Big World*

1. A tragedy is a literary work in which the main character comes to ruin as a consequence of a **moral weakness** or a fatal flaw.
2. A family of nine being wiped out when a train **hits** their camper is not a tragedy.
3. Not to mention all the middle-class normal who swear things are just fine but spend three hours a day commuting, and whose dull, meaningless lives are being stolen from them by **soulless corporations**.
4. Years ago, a **nice**, horrifying, fatal consumptive disease would come along and completely **eat** your fuckin' organs away.
5. Such **healthy attitudes** toward food!
6. Something else I'm getting tired of in this country is all this **stupid bullshit** I have to listen to about children.
7. And don't give me all that **weak shit**.
8. What I'm talking about is this constant, **mindless yammering** in the media, this **neurotic fixation** that suggests somehow everything – *everything* – has to revolve around the lives of children.
9. **Nature knows** best.
10. Another bunch of **ignorant bullshit** about your children: school uniforms.

11. And one more item about children: this **superstitious nonsense** of blaming tobacco companies for kids who smoke.
12. Of course you're depressed; you live in a **neon sewer**. (STATES ARE LOCATIONS)
13. Because it's one big fuckin' **garbage can**. (STATES ARE LOCATIONS)

### *The Little World*

1. Like the time you almost got killed by the big tractor-trailer, and had to pull off the road for about twenty minutes and listen to your **heart slamming** up against your rib cage?
2. You're driving through **heavy** downtown traffic, block to block, street to street.  
(MORE IS HEAVY)
3. Now, one last reminder before I tow this **trusty little shit-box** of mine into the shop for its bimonthly overhaul.
4. The last thing they need is for you to stop, get out of your car, go over to the wreckage and start bothering them with **stupid questions**.
5. To waste even more of your time, standing around with a bunch of worthless civil servants, filling out forms, answering a lot of **foolish questions** ... lying to the authorities?

### *The English Language*

1. It's a **weak word**.
2. It doesn't have a lot of **character**.
3. Another **weak word**.
4. How's that for a **lifeless**, typically American, twentieth-century phrase?
5. There's no **pulse** in "a senior citizen."

6. Well, perhaps “vomit” is too **strong** a word.
7. A important factor to keep in mind when all of this restaurant and food talk is **yuppie pretentiousness**.
8. I was in a **Yuppie joint** last year where the cover of the noontime menu, instead of saying *menu*, actually had the words *lunch solutions*.
9. And the **poor prunes** were not alone.

## Metonymy

### *The Big World*

1. The **news media** are playing a game with you.
2. Every time some **asshole** stops breathing these days it’s called a tragedy.
3. Epidemic prostate cancer in a nation brimming with **assholes**?
4. With half a block to go you have to decide who’s the really fast **asshole** in this group up ahead.
5. Forget the **Volvo**, she’s listening to public radio, and drive she way she lives – with fear and caution.

### *The Little World*

1. Just incinerate the motherfucker and get **his ass** off the road permanently?

## Direct metaphors

### *The Little World*

1. YOU DRIVE **LIKE OLD PEOPLE FUCK!**
2. Christians drive **as though** Jesus himself was a traffic cop.

*The English Language*

1. It's probably in Bumfuk, Egypt, the owner is from Rwanda and the food tastes **like** something the Hutus would feed to the Tutsis.

**Other metaphors (incl. profanity, slang, phrases and phrasal verbs)**

*The Big World*

1. You're being fed a large ration of other people's troubles designed to **keep your mind off** the things that should really be bothering you.
2. I guess the media figure if you're sitting around feeling sorry for every sick, injured, or dead person they can **scrounge up**, you'll have less time to dwell on how **fucked up** your own life is.
3. My attitude is **fuck** sick people and **fuck** a dead person.
4. Some guy **backing over** his kid in the driveway is not a tragedy, it's a bad, bad mistake.
5. A family of nine being **wiped out** when a train hits their camper is not a tragedy.
6. A tragedy is when you see some fat **bastard** in the airport with pockmarks on his face and his belly **hanging out**, and he's with a woman who has bad teeth and multiple bruises, and that night he's gonna make her **suck his dick**.
7. ...; or someone born with no heart who lives to be ninety-five and helps everyone in his neighborhood **neaten up** their lawns.
8. People who were born with every privilege and given every possible gift and talent, who had all the money they needed, were surrounded by good people, and then **went out and fucked** their lives **up** anyway?

9. I'd prefer to hear something like that once in a while, rather than this pseudo-inspirational **bullshit** that the media feel they have to feed us in order to **keep our minds off** America's decline.
10. That way I can **turn the fuckin' thing off**.
11. **Fuck** the odds.
12. And **fuck** the people who battle them.
13. I'm tired of this **shit** being presented in the context of real news.
14. Years ago, a nice, horrifying, fatal consumptive disease would come along and completely eat your **fuckin'** organs away.
15. I'm sure there are millions more **nodding off** in closets and attics all across the country.
16. Because it's one big **fuckin'** garbage can.
17. ..., and the swimming pool full of cherry Jell-O all **schlocked up** with bad fruit cocktail.
18. No wonder **fucked-up** teenage girls don't want to eat.
19. Something else I'm getting tired of in this country is all this stupid **bullshit** I have to listen to about children.
20. **Fuck** the children!
21. **Fuck** 'em!
22. **Fuck** kids; they're getting entirely too much attention.
23. And I also know that all of you boring single dads and working moms, who think you're such **fuckin'** heroes, aren't gonna like this, but somebody's gotta tell you for your own good.
24. And don't give me all that weak **shit**.
25. **Fuck** you!

26. Hazardous toys, **shit!**
27. Nature **knows best.**
28. Did you ever notice that every time some guy with an AK-47 strolls into the school yard and kills three or four of these **fuckin'** kids or teachers, the next day the school is overrun with psychologists and psychiatrists and grief counselors and trauma therapists, trying to help the children to cope?
29. **Shit!**
30. Another bunch of ignorant **bullshit** about your children: school uniforms.
31. Leave them the **fuck** alone!
32. **Fuck** you, Father, for you have sinned.
33. Who wants to get **sucked off** by a forty-three-year-old clergyman with beard stubble?
34. You kick him squarely in the nuts, and you get the **fuck** out of there as fast as you can, and you go tell somebody right away.
35. **Fuck** you, Father, I don't do that **shit.**
36. Try Jimmy Fogarty, I hear he **blew** the choirmaster.

*The Little World*

1. No wonder moths are so **fucked up.**
2. One of those incidents you can't just **shake off.**
3. Like the time you almost got killed by the big tractor-trailer, and had to **pull off** the road for about twenty minutes and listen to your heart slamming up against your rib cage?
4. Did you ever **pull up** to a red light, and go a little bit too far into the intersection?
5. **Holy shit!**

6. This guy's **drivin' along**, he's got someone sittin' right next to him in the passenger seat, and he goes straight through a red light.
7. Another **pain in the ass** you don't want to get behind is anyone who drives real sss-l-l-l-o-o-o-ww.
8. I **pull over** immediately and take public transportation.
9. I'm not about to **fuck** with a ghost car.
10. Just incinerate the **motherfucker** and get his ass off the road permanently?
11. ATTENTION, **ASSHOLE!**
12. It might cost you a little money, but it sure puts them **fuckin'** lights out in a hurry.
13. THE **GODDAMN RADIO IS THIS LOUD!!!**
14. As you **roll up** to the pack, you have to decide which lane to get into.
15. Now, one last reminder before I tow this trusty little **shit-box** of mine into the shop for its bimonthly overhaul.
16. You can't take **shit** from someone just because you work for him.
17. I ain't **stickin' around** this **fuckin'** place after hours, I'll tell you that right now.
18. Tell him you hope it's not one of those **chicken-shit** places where they dock your pay just for taking off Mondays and Fridays.
19. Who's the **cunt**?
20. Close the **fuckin'** door, will ya?
21. Close the **goddamn** door!
22. ...; **picking through** the refrigerator periodically, deciding which items to **throw away**.
23. If I hit something, or I **run** somebody **over**, I keep moving!
24. I'm just another guy, out, **driving around** looking for a little fun.

25. These people you **ran over** have enough troubles of their own without you stopping and **making things worse**.
26. **For God's sake**, stop living in the past.
27. If you do stop, sooner or later the police are going to **show up**.
28. To waste even more of your time, **standing around** with a bunch of worthless civil servants, **filling out** forms, answering a lot of foolish questions ... lying to the authorities?
29. There's just no sense in having two conflicting stories floating around about the same **dumb-ass** traffic accident.
30. I'm looking for an antique lamp stickin' out of a clown's **ass**.
31. If I'm gonna take the time to stop, I expect a couple of **fuckin'** laughs.

*The English Language*

1. You wanna gimme my **fuckin'** change, please?
2. I'll **give it a shot**.
3. All because of some **loose-lipped** clerk.
4. **Bullshit!**
5. **Goddamn**, this is great!
6. I started **bullshitting** myself when I reached my forties.
7. We may as well begin with the inflated job titles, since they seem to be **showing up** everywhere we visit.
8. And just to **round out** our meal, the reason *Chilean sea bass* became so trendy a few years ago was because it was no longer being called *Patagonian tooth fish*.
9. That sounds like more of that marketing **bullshit**.
10. When they say old-fashioned, they want us to think about **the old days**, don't they?

11. *Style* is another **bullshit** word you have to keep an eye on.
12. Any time you see the word *style* added to another word, someone is pulling your **prick**.
13. Folks, try not to be too **fuckin'** stupid, will ya?
14. Toasted snail penises; candied filet of panda asshole; deep-dish duck **dick**.
15. This is a word only a **bullshitter** could love: *hearty*.
16. Any time marketers add a *y* to the name of a food, you can be sure they're yanking your **schwartz**.
17. No **fuckin'** chocolate!
18. Lemme know if you spot any trace of a **goddamn** lemon in there.
19. The last one of these **bullshit** food words is *natural*.
20. And these comments are directed at all you environmental **jackoffs** out there.  
Untreated raw sewage, polyester, toxic chemical waste, used bandages, monkey **shit**.