Intertextual Face of Humour:

A Case Study of *Lauren Cooper Meets Dr Who*

Beata Mazurek-Przybylska[*]

Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to analyse the use of intertextual devices, such as parody, allusion and quotation in a television comedy text. The paper attempts at a brief review of the existing approaches to intertextuality and choosing the methodology that gives the best insight into intertextuality workings in the selected material. The role of parody, allusion and quotation is also discussed in view of creating humour against the backdrop of the superiority and incongruity theories of humour. It is stated that while the very concept of intertextual humour can be explained by the superiority theory, the role of most of the intertextual devices in the selected material is to create the incongruities that the audience is supposed to find amusing.

Keywords: humour, intertextuality, sitcom, superiority theory, incongruity theory

1. Introduction

Although the concept of intertextuality inspired a considerable amount of literature (e.g., Bloom 1973, 1975; Barthes 1977, Riffaterre 1990, Worton and Still 1990, Plett 1991, Fairclough 1992, Genette 1997, Allen 2000, Orr 2003), the extensive discussions of its forms and functions in humorous texts seem to be infrequent. The few exceptions include Neal R. Norrick's paper "Intertextuality in humour" (1989), which discusses the dependence of jokes on their external context, and which focuses on the differences between allusion and parody in jokes. Norrick opposes to treating parody as a form of extended allusion since he notices significant differences between the workings of both in the jokes he analyses. Salvatore Attardo (2001) in his *Humorous Texts: Semantic and Pragmatic Analysis* focuses on three generations of jokes and the role of familiarity of the audience with the established format of the jokes.

_____

* Beata Mazurek-Przybylska, Philological School of Higher Education, Wroclaw, Poland
  b.mazurek_przybylska@interia.eu

Those two analyses discuss intertextuality from humour research perspective but the material under analysis is restricted only to jokes. Another work, Jonathan Grey's (2006) book *Watching with the Simpsons*, which is a Critical Discourse Analysis reading of the popular television animated series, focuses on the manifestations of parody in the media text. The relation to the material on which the study was conducted makes *Watching with the Simpsons* exceptional in the fact that a television sitcom, popular and widely represented as it is among media formats, seems undervalued as the subject of linguistic study. Despite researchers' increasing interest in the development of a sitcom as a television genre (e.g., Neale and Krutnik 1990, Dalton and Linder 2005, Mills 2005, 2009), intertextual readings of highly popular situation comedies from the humor research perspective are virtually non-existent. To fill in this gap, this paper aims at the description of intertextual devices which can be identified in a selected comedy text and at analysis of the functions these devices play, especially in view of creating a humorous effect.

2. Intertextuality

Despite its omnipresence in literary, art or media studies, intertextuality is an ambiguous term, and the scope of disagreement among scholars as for its definition and methods of application has always been broad. Bakhtin's ideas of dialogism and polyphony, the view that "language is never our own" and that "every word is a response to previous words and elicits further responses" (Allen 2000, p. 27) initiated further discussions and elaboration of his concepts by Julia Kristeva who coined the term *intertextuality*. She expanded the meaning of the word *text* referring it to any kind of art (Allen 200, p. 52) and, as her interests lay mostly in text studies and semiotics, Kristeva went away from talking about *language* and *author* on the behalf of discussing *text* and *productivity*. Kristeva viewed intertextuality as a process of transformation of texts into a new text. Roland Barthes, on the other hand, differentiated between writer's and reader's intertextuality and focused more on the readers' part in the process of reading. Barthes divided readers into two groups: *consumers* and *readers* (Allen: 2000, p. 69). The latter group is called by Barthes *writers of the text* as they are active participants of the process of reading and are not satisfied with the sole stable meaning of the text. Since intertextuality was a highly theoretical notion, some academics endeavored to make it more accessible and applicable to text studies. Such an attempt was made by Gerard Genette (1997a) who created his own classification of textual relations within the text and between texts. Intertextuality is for Genette only one of the possible transtextual relations, beside other types such as architextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality and hypetextuality, and it implies coexistence of two or more texts in one text. As Graham Allen (200, p. 101) explains, "Reduced now to the issues of quotation, plagiarism, and allusion, intertextuality thus defined is no longer concerned with semiotic processes

of cultural and textual signification. Genette's redescription gives us a very pragmatic and determinable intertextual relationship between specific elements of individual texts." It can be said, however, that Genette's classification though aimed at ordering textual relations complicates them due to his new terminology.

With the development of the media, especially television and the internet, the concept of intertextuality gained a new dimension and became more powerful as these media enabled faster circulation of content of all kinds. Nevertheless, the intertextuality-related problems such as a terminological confusion and multiplicity of academic approaches towards textual relations still remain valid. Amongst the approaches to intertextuality which attempt at simplifying its practical application, television researcher John Fiske proposed a typology in which he divided intertextuality into 'vertical' and 'horizontal' (Fiske 1987, p. 108). 'Horizontal' intertextuality occurs when texts are linked to each other through genre, content or characters. 'Vertical' intertextuality involves explicit references of secondary texts to primary texts (ibid.). Yet, as Fiske claims, television viewers do not have to be familiar with primary texts in order to read intertextually. Another classification of intertextual phenomena, especially in the press, was presented by Norman Fairclough (1992) in his *Discourse and Social Change*, where he proposed his division into 'manifest' intertextuality and 'interdiscursivity'. Fairclough (1992, p. 104) defines manifest intertextuality as the situation when "other texts are explicitly present in the text under analysis; they are 'manifestly' marked or cued by features on the surface of the text, such as quotation marks." Interdiscursivity, on the other hand, "is a matter of how a discourse type is constituted through a combination of elements of orders of discourse" (Fairclough 1992, p. 118). Fairclough's division is clear and applicable, but he does not devote much space to manifest intertextuality, its types or roles it can play in a text. Media analysts Brian Ott and Cameron Walter ascribe problems with practical application of intertextual analysis to the fact that the term *intertextuality* possesses two different meanings: it can be understood as interpretive practice or as textual strategy (Ott and Walter 2000, p. 430). The solution, in their opinion, is specifying which meaning is deployed: interpretive practice entails readers/audience's experience of a text, and textual strategy is defined as producers/authors' technique of encoding references to other texts so that the audience/readers could derive pleasure from the experience of decoding them and tracing them back (Ott and Walter 2000, p. 431). Discussing what they call 'textual strategy', Ott and Walter propose their own classification of this type of intertextuality, in which parodic allusion, creative appropriation and self-reflexive reference form the main categories (ibid.). This classification, notwithstanding its hermeneutic value, is not devoid of some drawbacks as it oversimplifies the intertextual terminology and fails to make a clear distinction between the

complex terms like allusion and parody, which do not cease to inspire a considerable amount of literature. Therefore albeit Ott and Walter's view of intertextuality as textual strategy is going to be adopted in this paper, parody, allusion and quotation are going to be analysed separately.

2.1. Parody

Despite a long tradition in treating parody as an intertextual relation (for example Bakhtin 1992, Genette 1982, Riffaterre 1984), there is disagreement among scholars not only as to whether parody is always humorous by nature or whether it always expresses a critical attitude towards the parodied text but also as to what can be subject to parody. The broadest definition of parody is proposed by Linda Hutcheon (1985, p. 32) who defines parody as 'repetition with a difference' since, in her opinion, only such a broad definition is capable of including all cases of parodic texts in the postmodern world. According to Hutcheon, parody does not necessarily have to possess a comic value nor does it have to be critical towards its subject. This, however, can lead to blurring the boundaries between parody and other instances of imitation or, for example, allusion. By contrast, the approach proposed by Samuel Dentith (2000, p. 9) suggests defining parody as "any kind of cultural practice which provides a relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice." Dentith, unlike Hutcheon, appreciates the significance of humour for parody effectiveness but he generally advised ceasing a disagreement over one universal definition of parody. In his view, parody is such a complex term that the attempts to close all its forms and aspects in one definition are doomed to failure so each scholar should create his/her own definition of parody depending on the focus of his/her study (Dentith 2000, p. 6). Another scholar, Margaret Rose (1995, p. 52) defines parody as "the comic refunctioning of performed linguistic or artistic material." As comedy shows rely widely on parody, it appears that its comic value is the primary reason for the parody's presence therein. Following Margaret Rose's definition, then, for the purpose of this analysis parody is going to be defined as a comic rendition of a type of discourse.

2.2. Allusion and quotation

Over a few decades allusion has ascended from a simple reference to a complex phenomenon which attracts attention of numerous literary scholars (for example Ben-Porat 1976, Perri 1978). One of most detailed discussions of allusion is proposed by Udo J. Hebel in his contribution to Heinrich F. Plett's *Intertextuality* (1991) entitled "Towards Descriptive Poetics of *Allusion.*" Udo J. Hebel defines allusion as "a directional sign that refers the reader to another text, outside the alluding text" (Hebel 1991, p. 137). In order to pinpoint all powers of allusion and its referential values, Hebel suggests six aspects or, as he writes, descriptive categories which allow an in-depth discussion of

allusion, i.e. syntagmatic manifestations of allusion, localization of allusions, dimensions of reference, modification, semantic meaning and cotextualisation of allusion. Added to all this, Hebel introduces the seventh category which he describes as the function of allusion in the text which can be of three types: intratextual, intertextual and metatextual (Hebel 1991, p. 156). The metatextual function of allusion as defined by Hebel is restricted to comments on other texts. The intratextual function occurs when allusion contributes to characterization or evocation of setting or theme which help to create the internal world of the text. The intertextual function is referred to by Hebel as "authentication" contributing to "creating a reality effect" (ibid.).

Hebel treats quotation as just a subcategory of allusion, yet in the same volume Heinrich F. Plett (1991, p. 8) proposes a discussion of quotation in its own right. In "The Grammar of Quotation", he proposes methodology to describe quotation as an intertextual relation in view of the aspects such as quantity, quality, distribution, frequency, interference and markers. Plett's descriptive criteria seem to focus more on the surface of the text and less on the semantic changes introduced by the quotation into the text. He also does not make any attempt to pinpoint the functions quotation can perform in the text. Therefore although Plett's descriptive approach to quotation seems to be a valuable complement to Hebel's categorisation (Plett 1991, p. 10), for the purpose of this study the methodology proposed by Hebel is going to be used.

3. Leading theories of humour

As this paper aims at discussing the humorous potential of some intertextual relations, it seems indispensable to briefly review the existing approaches to humour. Contemporary humour theories can be divided into three major groups: the Relief Theories, the Superiority Theories and the Incongruity Theories. The Relief Theories focus on psychological aspects of humour and the effects laughter has on the person experiencing humour (Morreall 1987, Attardo 1994, Billig 2005, Chłopicki 1995). The Superiority Theories also known as Disparagment Theories (Attardo 1994, Chłopicki 1995, Biling 2005, Dynel 2013) stress the social context of laughter, claiming that people laugh when they feel superior to others (Morreall 1987, p. 129). The feeling of superiority may stem from the viewers' recognition of the fact that they do not possess weaknesses or faults displayed by the target of the joke, like clumsiness or lack of intelligence. Viewers' enhancement of their self-esteem leads to their feeling of enjoyment and amusement. This type of humour is often directed at an individual or at social groups and is frequently aggressive.

The incongruity theories of humour, which are more linguistically oriented, give support to the view that people laugh when they spot some kind of inconsistency in a text or a situation (e.g.,

Shultz 1972, Suls 1972, Raskin 1988, Attardo 1994, Forabosco 1992, 2008). "Incongruity" as defined by Shultz is "a conflict between what is expected and what actually occurs in the joke" (Shultz 1976, p. 12 cited in Ritchie 1999, p. 6). Yet often the very fact of finding a text incongruous does not make it humorous and that is why one of the variants of the incongruity theory, namely the Incongruity-Resolution model, gained the academic acclaim. The version of this model developed by Suls is based on the assumption that humour results from a process of encountering incongruity and finding a logical explanation to it, thanks to some additional information supplied or found (Ritchie 1999, p. 3). This model presupposes then the necessity of finding some kind of cognitive connection between predictions and incongruity that occurs. This cognitive connection is the condition of humour as opposed to some other reactions to incongruity. The disagreement, however, still remains over the necessity of existence of the resolution and the degree to which the incongruity is resolvable in humorous texts (see Forabosco 2008). For the purpose of this paper, the superiority and incongruity theories are going to be used to account for the workings of humour as although both of them stress seemingly different aspects of humorous phenomena, in fact they can complement each other and give full insight into humour creating processes in a media text.

4. The choice of material and the scope of study

The text under analysis is a part of *The Catherine Tate Show*, a British television show (2003–2006), classified as a sketch show, a variety of sitcom. Although the analysis of generic features of both a sitcom and a sketch show is beyond the scope of this study, a few dominant features of a sketch show need to be defined. Sketch shows consist of half an hour long episodes, which are made of several minute-long sketches and focus mostly on aspects of daily life as well as social and political matters (Mowatt 2010, p. 20). Respectively each episode of *The Catherine Tate Show* is composed of several minute long sketches, majority of which are not connected with each other by any common narrative framework neither within one episode nor within the whole series. This fragmented structure of each episode enables the analysis of each sketch as an independent text and facilitates its linguistic examination. The sketch selected for this analysis features 16-year-old Lauren Cooper, a badly-behaved teenager, whose catchphrase "Am I bovvered?" was voted the Word of the Year for 2006 (The Guardian 12 Oct 2006) confirming the success of the show. Lauren Cooper is a regular character in each episode of the show and most of the Lauren Cooper sketches display occasional instances of intertextuality, yet the text selected for the purpose of this analysis is entirely based on intertextual play. The sketch was broadcast as a part of the British national charity event Comic Relief on 16 March 2007, and it features a guest star, David Tennant, famous for his main role in another highly successful British science fiction series *Dr Who* where he plays the main role of the

Doctor, a time-travelling humanoid alien. The presence of the guest star and the context which he brings into the sketch bear responsibility for making the humour highly reliant on intertextual devices. The selected sketch depicts a secondary school English lesson on Shakespeare substituted by a teacher of the Scottish origin played by David Tennant. Lauren Cooper, a disruptive student, tries to prevent the teacher from conducting the lesson by challenging him to be Dr Who, which he consistently denies. Reprimanded by the teacher for her behavior, Lauren gets irritated and starts a fast-paced rant full of accusations, random quotations, changing accents and she finishes by reciting a whole Shakespeare sonnet from memory. Unable to interrupt and silence the student, the teacher takes out his sonic screwdriver and changes Lauren into a little figure of his assistant, proving that he really is Dr Who. The sketch is typical of any other Lauren Cooper sketches in its structure, the course of events and the behavior of the main character. Yet its intertextual density makes it unique and worthy a more detailed analysis in view of the existing theories of humour.

5. Analysis of the sketch

5.1. Parody

The selected text is based on a parody of a teenage discourse with its phonological, morphological and structural features.

(1)
> (Lauren and Lise are sitting in a classroom)
> **Lise:** I can't believe we've got double English.
> **Lauren:** English is well dry.
> **Lise:** I don't see what so great about reading anyways.
> **Lauren:** No, readings for loooosers.
> **Lise:** Innit though. A'least we got a new teacher today.
> **Lauren:** Yeah, right, that'll be a laugh won'it?

The language used in the sketch by the main character is an exaggerated version of the teenage English with its intonation, ungrammaticalities such as *anyways*, *innit*, slang expressions (the use of *well* instead of *very*), colloquialisms (*whatever*, *dry*) and the use of *though*. Later on, the discourse that is parodied is one of disruptiveness, complacency, impoliteness, accusation and denial to take responsibility for one's behaviour. Thus it confirms the stereotype of a badly-behaved working class teenager and the accumulation of those stereotypical features is at the heart of this parody. In the course of the sketch, however, the exaggerated teenage language gets intertwined with a

Shakespeare-style language as Lauren starts using forms like *ammist*, *forsooth*, *looketh*, *thou*, *thee* and *my liege*.

(2)

> **Lauren-** *fhuh* Ammist I bovvered? Ammist I bovvered forsooth?
> **Mr. Logan-** Lauren.
> **Lauren-** Looketh at my face.
> **Mr. Logan-** I don't--
> **Lauren-** Looketh at my face.
> **Mr. Logan-** Stop it.
> **Lauren-** Is this a bovvered face thou see before thee?
> **Mr. Logan-** Right, I'm calling your parents.

The combination of the two parodied discourses and their overlapping contributes to a humorous effect since despite the Middle English forms, the message and attitudes expressed in Lauren's rant remain the same as earlier in the sketch, i.e. Lauren communicates her arrogance and impoliteness. The juxtaposition of the different language forms and the actual content creates therefore a comic effect, due to the inconsistency in the discourse. Hence it can be concluded that the parody in the sketch is based on exaggeration and intensification of the linguistic features associated with the language used by a teenage group. The parody of the Middle English is achieved through contrast between archaic language forms and the message that is being conveyed.

5.2. Allusion

All the allusions that appear in the selected sketch can be divided into three categories: allusions to *Dr Who* series, inspired by the presence of the guest actor, allusions to the Scottish origin of the actor and allusions to Shakespeare. Hebel's typology of allusions, which he calls syntagmatic manifestations of allusions encompasses quotational allusion, titular allusion and onomastic allusion (Hebel 1991, p. 142). As quotational allusion, or quotation, is going to be discussed separately in this paper, the focus here is the remaining two aspects, i.e. the titular allusion and onomastic allusion. The titular allusion *Lauren Cooper meets Dr Who* appears in the title of the sketch clearly indicating what references the audience is expected to make and which media text is intended to be juxtaposed with the sketch. Onomastic allusions appear in the dialogue between Lauren and the teacher and they refer to *Dr Who* series and Shakespeare, who is the topic of the lesson.

(3)

> **Mr. Logan** I don't know what you're talking about.

Lauren- You look like Doctor Who though!
Mr. Logan I'm not Doctor Who, I'm your English teacher.
Lauren- I don't think you are though.
Mr. Logan- Lauren.
Lauren- I think you're a nine hundred and forty five year old Time Lord.
Mr. Logan- Listen.
Lauren- Did you just pitch up from Mars?
Mr. Logan- Don't be ridiculous.
Lauren- You know your house, right.
Mr. Logan- What?
Lauren- You know your house?
Mr. Logan- Yeah.
Lauren- Is it bigger on the inside?
Mr. Logan- Be quiet.
Lauren- Have you parked the TARDIS on a meter?
Mr. Logan- Can we please get back to Shakespeare!
Lauren- *fhuh* (sits back into chair)
Mr. Logan- Thank you. So--
Lauren- Do you fancy Billie Piper sir?

In this exchange, Lauren drops the other name of Dr Who, a five-hundred-year-old time Lord, she mentions his vehicle TARDIS and his assistant Rose Tyler played by the actress Billy Piper, trying to find out what the role of David Tennant is: just a teacher or the Doctor. Shakespeare is mentioned to express the teacher's and Lauren's opinion of his poetry and to set up the action of the sketch by communicating the topic of the lesson. Due to the nature of the sketch, all the allusions appear in the exchanges between the characters, they can be classified as those belonging to the internal system of communication (Hebel 1991, p. 146). Therefore it is the characters themselves who operate allusions creating the suspense and forwarding the action. Another aspect, referential dimension of allusion, can be temporal, spatial and connected with area of reference (Hebel 1991, p. 148). Temporal allusions in the sketch belong to two categories: contemporary media culture (all the references to *Dr Who*) and the Elizabethan literature (Shakespearian expressions used by Lauren). The spatial area of reference constitutes the British culture-context and the frame of reference is restricted to pop culture and Shakespeare. The next category, cotextualistation, focuses on fitting the allusion into its immediate surroundings in the text. Most allusions are naturally fitted into the conversation between Lauren and the teacher (onomastic *Dr Who* allusions) yet some allusions to Shakespeare in Lauren's angry rant, i.e. repetition of "my liege", constitute an inconsistent flow of words and phrases. On the whole, all the allusions are communicated by Lauren, and they are either part of her conversation which aims at irritating the teacher or a part of Lauren's nonsensical rant.

5.3. Quotation

Despite Mary Orr's claim that "quotation openly states and acknowledges its status as borrower and borrowing" (Orr 2003, p. 130), the quotations in the selected sketch are indirect, i.e. there is no mark or statement which signals or informs the viewer of their origin. Recognition and identification of the quotations depend solely on the viewers' cultural competence. There are four quotations in the selected sketch. The exchange between Lauren and the teacher is a *Dr Who* quotation and a pun at the same time:

(4)
> **Lauren-** Are you the Doctor?
>
> **Mr. Logan-** Doctor who?

There are also two quotations from Shakespeare, the first being the Sonnet 130 and the other one, a sentence from *Romeo and Juliet*, "Rose by the other name would smell as sweet." In fact, this final sentence pronounced by Dr Who has two co-existent semantic meanings. The sentence is pronounced when the teacher, irritated by Lauren's disruptive behavior, changes her into a little figure of his assistant Rose Tyler, thanks to his supernatural powers. Therefore the quotation is actually play on words as 'rose' is both the original word in the quotation and the name of Dr Who's assistant. The fourth quotation is a part of the traditional Scottish song "You'll take the high road, I'll take the low." The song and the sonnet are cited by Lauren in her angry monologue. As in the case of allusion, the referential dimension of quotations is restricted to pop culture (*Dr Who* series), Shakespeare and the Scottish folk culture. Its temporal aspect ranges from contemporary culture to the Elizabethan times and the spatial area is restricted to the British literature and television. The cotext which is a teenage discourse stands in opposition to what can be usually expected from the context of Shakespeare's sonnet or part of a traditional Scottish song. The cotext is Lauren's part of the dialogue, so taken into account that Lauren is a disruptive, unmotivated student, the inclusion of quotations in her speech is something unexpected, which creates discrepancy between Lauren's initial image and her subsequent verbal behavior.

5.4. Functions of parody, allusion and quotation

Out of the three functions which allusion and quotation can perform in a text, the metatextual function, or comments on other texts, is scarcely represented in the selected sketch. It can be reduced to Lauren's sentence: "Shakespeare is well dry", which is contrasted with the teacher's words about Shakespeare, such as 'bard', 'genius' and "you're not worthy to mention his name". The function of Lauren's sentence is to pass the information that Shakespeare is not regarded as an interesting author by an average teenager and to create the image of herself as a student uninterested in literature.

Similarly, the teacher's expressions confirm his image of an educated person. Hence it can be noticed that those allusions, metatextual on the surface, in fact serve an intratextual function, as they help to outline the personalities of the characters in the sketch. Apart from characterization, other intratextual functions of *Dr Who* allusions include setting the scene and creating suspense as to what role David Tennant plays in the sketch: a teacher or Dr Who. The Shakespeare allusions, Scottish song and sonnet quotation serve mainly an entertaining function or, to be more precise a humor inducing function, i.e. help to create some inconsistency in Lauren's stereotypical image construed by means of parody of a teenage discourse, which the audience is supposed to find humorous. The *Romeo and Juliet* quotation delivered by the teacher is a punch line closing the sketch. Therefore most of allusions and quotations have a very specific function to perform at different stages of the development of the plot. All *Dr Who* allusions can also be interpreted as an attempt to reinforce the connection between the episode and *Dr Who* series thanks to the repetition of the basic facts about the Doctor. In this way, their function can be classified as intertextual as they form clear references to other media text. In addition, they can be considered a motivation to start watching *Dr Who* for those unfamiliar with the series. Overall, the allusions and quotations perform mostly intratextual and intertextual functions in the selected sketch, yet those functions are closely related to creating a humorous effect on the audience.

6. Humorous potential of the intertextual devices

Since all the discussed intertextual devices contribute to achieving a humorous effect in the sketch, it seems indispensable to analyse the very process of evoking laughter in the audience. For the purposes of this study, the terms like *humour*, *laughter* and *amusement* will be used interchangeably in spite of the obvious differences between them, since the intricacies of their definitions are beyond the scope of this study. As it has already been mentioned, all the workings of humor in the selected sketch can be captured by two leading theories of humour: the incongruity theory and the superiority theory of humour. The general concept of the sketch can be explained in terms of the superiority theory as the sketch is based on poking fun at a particular age group, especially their behavior and way of speaking. Lauren, as a teenager, conforms to the stereotype of a badly-behaved youngster who is bored with school. The accumulation of features associated with the teen age creates a humorous effect and makes this age group the butt of laughter. In addition, the very fact of alluding to other texts and challenging the audience to recognize the source generates humour. Brett Mills in *The Sitcom*, when discussing the role of laugh track in sitcoms in the light of the Superiority Theory, states, "The mass of people to be heard laughing on a sitcom laugh track doesn't just suggest that something is funny; it suggests something is obviously, clearly, unarguably, unproblematically

funny, and that such responses are collectively defined and experienced." He also stresses the fact that laugh track excludes people who for some reason are not amused by a joke (Mills 2009, p. 81). It can be assumed then that if an intertextual joke in a sitcom is accompanied by a laugh on the laugh track as it is in the selected sketch, it is treated as something that is 'obviously, unarguably' funny and those who failed to read and construe humorous meaning by proper analysis of the joke's intertextual relations are somehow excluded from this laughter experience. Lack of the required cultural literacy and therefore the inability to appreciate the quality of a joke place the viewer in the inferior position when compared to those who succeeded in recognising a humorous stimulus in a joke thanks to their familiarity with the "proper" texts. Not only then can presenting a social group as inferior by mocking its characteristic features be a source of humour but also the feeling of superiority resulting in laughter can be evoked by the very fact of recognizing intertextual relations in a joke or a sketch.

As for individual humorous moments, the Incongruity Theory seems to be an effective tool to account for their workings. All the incongruities which can be noticed in the sketch are generated by allusion and quotations, and they include Lauren's use of Shakespeare-like language, the quotation "You'll take the high road, I'll take the low" and her recitation of the Sonnet 130. They all undermine the image of a typical teenager created by Lauren at the beginning of the sketch, as they reveal Lauren's possession of literary knowledge. So the audience is here confronted with the good student-bad student opposition, with the parody focusing on and stressing the features of Lauren as a bad student and allusions and quotations intermittently undermining this image as they reveal Lauren's possession of some knowledge which is usually associated with a good student. Out of the two models proposed by Suls: the incongruity-resolution model and the model based on incongruity alone, it seems that the latter case is observable in the sketch (Suls 1983, p. 47). Therefore the condition of finding the incongruity humorous, i.e. the existence of a cognitive rule ("resolution") which explains the incongruity, is not met by the selected sketch. This confirms the view expressed by Morreall that "it is possible to be faced with some incongruity and enjoy it, without feeling compelled to figure it out" (Morreall 1987, p. 196). It can be stated then that the humour in the sketch stems from incongruities created by means of intertextual devices, yet the incongruities seem unresolved as there is no logical explanation for inconsistencies observable in the sketch.

7. Conclusions

The selected sketch is rich with intertextual devices which take form of parody, allusion and quotation. They appear at particular stages of development of the sketch and perform specific

functions directed both at the development of the plot and at creating a desired effect on the viewers. Parody and allusion help to set the scene, define the personality of the characters as well as grabbing the audience's interest in unfolding of the plot. The roles of the quotations are divergent: the song quote and the sonnet, because of their length and incoherence with the cotext, create a humorous effect strengthened by their unexpectedness and discrepancy between what the audience know about the main character and her actual behavior. The teacher's quotation is a play on words and it closes the sketch in a surprising way. Therefore it can be concluded that the primary function of all intertextual devices is to evoke laughter on the part of the audience by means of exaggerated imitation (parody), an element of surprise (allusion and quotation) and an element of incongruity (allusion and quotation). The humorous potential of incongruities can be captured by the incongruity theories of humor, yet not by their Incongruity-Resolution variant. High reliance of the sketch on the external references makes its reception dependent on viewers' knowledge both of high and popular culture, which points to superiority theories of humor as those capable of providing a possible explanation of humor workings in the selected sketch. The relation between both types of humor in the sketch shows the dominance of the superiority theory-oriented type of humor (parody), which creates space for the incongruity-based humor (allusions and quotations).

References

Allen, Graham. (2000). *Intertextuality*. New York: Routledge.

Attardo, Salvatore. (1994). *Linguistic Theories of Humor*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Attardo, Salvatore. (2001). *Humorous Texts: Semantic and Pragmatic Analysis.* Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Bakhtin, Mikhail M. (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin* (ed. Michael Holquist, tr. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist). Austin: University of Texas Press.

Barthes, Roland. (1977). "The Death of the Author." [In:] Stephen Head (ed.) *Image Music Text.* London: Fontana Press, pp. 142–148.

Ben-Porat, Ziva. (1976). "The Poetics of Literary Allusion." [In:] *PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature* 1, pp. 105–128.

Billig, Michael. (2005). *Laughter and Ridicule: Towards Social Critique of Humour.* London, New Delhi, Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Bloom, Harold. (1973). *The Anxiety of Influence – A Theory of Poetry.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Bloom, Harold. (1975). *A Map of Misreading.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Chłopicki, Władysław. (1995). *O humorze poważnie.* Kraków: PAN.

Dalton, Mary M., Laura R. Linder, eds. (2005). *The Sitcom Reader: America Viewed and Skewed.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Dentith, Simon. (2000). *Parody.* London, New York: Routledge.

Dynel, Marta. (2013). "Humorous Phenomena in Dramatic Discourse." [In:] *The European Journal of Humour Research,* 1(1), pp. 22–60.

Fiske, John. (1987). *Television, Culture, Popular Pleasure.* London, New York: Routledge.

Forabosco, Giovanni. (2008). "Is the Concept of Incongruity Still a Useful Construct for the Advancement of Humor Research?"[In:] *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics*, 4, pp. 45–62.

Genette, Gérard. (1997a). *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Genette, Gerard. (1997b). *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretations.* Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

Gray, Jonathon. (2006). *Watching with The Simpsons.* New York: Routledge.

Hebel, Udo J. (1991). "Towards the Descriptive Poetics of *Allusion*." [In:] Heinrich F. Plett (ed.) *Intertextuality*, New York: de Gruyter, pp. 135–164.

Hutcheon, Linda. (1985). *A Theory of Parody – The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms.* New York, London: Methuen.

Kristeva, Julia. (1980). *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Mills, Brett. (2005). *Television Sitcom.* London: BFI.

Mills, Brett. (2009). *The Sitcom.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Morreall, John, ed. (1987). *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor.* New York: State University of New York Press.

Mowatt, Ian. (2010). "Analysing *Little Britain* as a sketch show." [In:] Sharon Lockyer (ed.) *Reading Little Britain.* London: I.B. Tauris & Co, pp.19–34.

Neale, Steve, Frank Krutnik. (1990). *Popular Film and Television Comedy.* London, New York: Routledge.

Norrick, Neal R. (1989). "Intertextuality in humour." [In:] *Humour* 2(2), pp. 117–139.

Orr, Mary. (2003). *Intertexuality: Debates and Contexts.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Ott, Brian, Cameron Walter. (2000). "Intertextuality: interpretive practice and textual strategy." [In:] *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 17(4), pp. 429–446.

Perri, Carmela. (1978). "On alluding." [In:] *Poetics* 7(3), pp. 289-307.

Plett, Heinrich F. (1991). "Intertextualities." [In:] Heinrich F. Plett (ed.) *Intertextuality*. New York: de Gruyter, pp. 3–29.

Riffaterre, Michael. (1978). *Semiotics of Poetry.* Bloomington, London: Indiana University Press.

Riffaterre, Michael. (1990). "Compulsory Reader Response: the Intertextual Drive." [In:] Michael Worton, Judith Still (ed.) *Intertextuality-Theories and Practices.* Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press.

Ritchie, Graeme. (1999). "Developing the Incongruity-Resolution Theory." The University of Edinburgh https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/.

Rose, Margaret A. (1995). *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-Modern*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shultz, Thomas R. (1976). "A Cognitive-Developmental Analysis of Humour." [In:] Chapman and Foot, Chapter 1, pages 11–36 [qtd. In:] Graeme Ritchie (1999) "Developing the Incongruity-Resolution Theory." The University of Edinburgh https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/.

Suls, Jerry M. (1972). "A Two-Stage Model for the Appreciation of Jokes and Cartoons: an Information-Processing Analysis." [In:] Goldstein and McGhee (1972), chapter 4, pages 81–100 [qtd in:] Graeme Ritchie 1999 "Developing the Incongruity-Resolution Theory." The University of Edinburgh https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/.

Suls, Jerry M. (1983). "Cognitive Processes in Humor Appreciation." [In:] *Handbook of Humor Research,* Paul E. McGhee and Jeffrey H. Goldstein ed. 39–57. New York: Springer.

Other:

The Catherine Tate Comic Relief Special 2007 Tiger Aspects/BBC/Comic Relief MCSP Endemol

West DVD