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Plotting Poetry 7: Metres of Humour Conference report

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The seventh Plotting Poetry Conference, entitled "Metres of Humour" was organised in Einsiedeln, Switzerland, on June 26 to 28, 2024. The main focus was on humour in verse, although other topics that use quantitative tools and methods in investigating poetry or poeticity were also presented.

The conference was opened by *Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir* (Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies, Reykjavík), who presented a paper titled "Humorous Lists" that explored poetic lists in two lesser-known genres of Icelandic post-medieval nonsense-poetry, öfugmælavísur ('self-contradictory stanzas') and post-medieval þulur, a rigmarole-like genre of folk poetry. The paper argued that poetic lists (versified catalogues) have often been used for humorous purposes in post-medieval Icelandic poetry – alone or as parts of larger compositions – in strictly metrical and structured verse as well as in loosely metrical verse. Among those loosely metrical compositions are the late medieval Grettisfærsla ('Handing on of Grettir') and the early modern Hrómundarbréf ('Hrómundur's letter'). When used in such larger compositions, poetic lists are often their most rhythmically and structurally organized parts. In the first and last line(s) of such lists, the humorous element is often combined with metrical or syntactical irregularity; a metrical change often signals the humorous moment. However, a humorous shift may also take place in the middle of the list or without a metrical signal. Dr. Helgadóttir demonstrated a number of examples, from Icelandic and English poems, comparing types of lists and how they functioned within their literary-historical contexts, paying careful attention to the poetics of each work. The paper concluded that post-medieval þulur have a much less obvious rhythmical structure, but

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that meter does matter in structuring the lists and amplifying their effect. The listing structure of these poems drives their humour through playful accumulation and excess. This contrasted with the poetics of lists in öfugmælavísur, which have a much more rigid metrical structure and thus allow less space for rhythmical variation toward humorous aesthetic ends.

Pablo Núñez Díaz (Universidad de Oviedo) presented a paper he authored with *Guillermo Marco Remón* (UNED) and *Clara I. Martínez Cantón* (UNED) titled "Joaquín Sabina: Wit Within the Verse. An Exploration of the Humorous Implications of His Poetic Metrics." The talk delved into the work of Joaquín Sabina, one of the most successful Spanish singer-songwriters, whose work has spanned a period of over 40 years. Starting from the premise that there remains a lack of research on the poetics of humour in Sabina's work, the paper took up the role of metrics (verse structures, rhyme, enjambment, etc.) in Sabina's humorous lyrics. The authors conducted a manual analysis of Sabina's entire songbook and identified works they categorized as humorous compositions (22 in total) before moving on to a programmatic study of the devices of versification in this sub-corpus. The team deployed a number of empirical tools in their study, including JUMPER for studying meter, Spanish Rhyme Annotator for studying rhymes, and ANJA for studying enjambments. The study found that there was a greater diversity of meter in humorous compositions, and posited that this degree of variation contributed to humour through its subversion of expectations, in contrast to non-humorous songs, which tended to deploy a predictable meter. In addition, the humorous corpus tended toward simpler, more repetitive rhyme patterns.

Nazarii Nazarov (Musée de l'Homme, Paris) presented a talk titled "How long can poetic formulas persist in a folk epic?" The talk engaged with classical formulaic theories on oral composition, including studies by Milman Parry and Albert Lord, as well as Gregory Nagy. Via a new method of metrical annotation of folk epics, Dr. Nazarov proposed an approach for charting the morphology of poetic traditions over time and determining the rate of change of their poetic formulas. The author created three corpora of folklore epics for analysis, digitizing and translating them to a text format for computation: Slavic (Ukrainian, North Russian, Serbian, Bosnian, Slovenian, Bulgarian), Greek (ancient, middle, and modern Greek), and Iranian (Digori-Ossetian, Firdowsi's Shahnameh, Tajik Gurugli, and Kurdish epics). The study found that about 40 etymologically related poetic formulas can be traced for the Slavic epics. Between the Common Slavic and Homeric epics, 17 etymologically related formulas were found. Between the Modern Greek epic songs and the Homeric epic, there are about 20 poetic formulas in common. From these statistics, the paper concluded that the relative rate of loss of poetic epithets,

paired with their replacement by emergent formulas, can be described with a mathematical function. Therefore, it is possible to determine the historical horizon of the reconstruction of poetics, to specify the dates of divergence of both language groups within the Indo-European language family and the corresponding poetic traditions, and to identify the most stable fragments of poetic language.

In his talk, "Fine-grained Annotation of Enjambement in Historical and Contemporary German Poetry", *Thomas Haider* (Uni Passau & MPIEA Frankfurt) examined enjambment as a key stylistic and performative feature in poetry, focusing on its structural, syntactic, and aesthetic implications. Enjambment, the continuation of a sentence beyond a line or stanza break, creates tension between syntax and meter, disrupting natural linguistic flow and prompting interpretive engagement from readers. This dynamic interplay separates meaning from form, introducing ambiguity, contrast, and unexpected resolutions. Haider highlighted enjambment's stylistic uses, such as emphasizing contrasts, creating dual meanings, and generating humorous effects through broken rhymes. An example was the split compound *Mai-// käfer*, subverting expectations through morphological enjambment. His study introduced a fine-grained typology for annotating enjambments based on syntactic and semantic disruptions, applied to historical and contemporary German poetry datasets. High interannotator agreement confirmed the typology's reliability, enabling detailed exploration of how syntactic structures intersect with metrical patterns. The annotated datasets also tested language models' understanding of the syntax-prosody interface. While models showed some competence in aligning syntactic and metrical structures, they struggled with nuanced violations introduced by enjambment, revealing gaps in current natural language processing capabilities. Haider emphasized enjambment's role in shaping poetic meaning, offering new annotation tools for literary and computational research. The presentation underscored the potential for expanding enjambment annotation to other poetic traditions and enhancing language models through specialized training.

Nicolas Mugavero (Weber State University) presented a paper titled "Moby-Dictionary: A Computational Approach to Humor as Lexical Intrigue." The paper revisited a conceptual poetics project by Dr. Mugavero, titled "Lexicon Cetus" (2016), which catalogued each unique word found in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. In that project, the entries in the lexicon were extracted using Python scripts, and definitions were sourced from Princeton's WordNet. The aim of the project was to expose the subterranean humour in Melville's work by exploring its diction. The paper began with an introduction to "Lexicon Cetus" and went on to argue that the work, beyond being a dictionary, could

serve as an alternative way of navigating Melville's famous novel and its layers of linguistic signification. It went on to focus on the question of humour latent in the text, which could emerge from what the author termed "lexical intrigue", or places where Melville's idiolectic use of language allows for humorous, ironic, or subversive interpretive frames. The talk featured scans of "Lexicon Cetus" and demonstrated how the work's dictionary-like structure was augmented through interspersed graphics meant as interpretations of the lexicon, which itself was an interpretation of *Moby Dick*, thus presenting a nesting doll of frame analysis. The author argued that the intent of the paper was to demonstrate the potential for computational and empirical methodologies to reframe well-trodden texts and expose something new in them. The paper was ultimately dedicated to the potential for these methods to give new views into poetic form, the slipperiness of language, and the humour that can reside below the surface of a text.

Neža Kočnik (University of Ljubljana) and *Petr Plecháč* (Czech Academy of Sciences) presented a paper titled "Corpus of Slovenian Poetry", which demonstrated PoeTree.sl, a corpus of Slovenian poetry that is part of the overall PoeTree project. PoeTree contains, in total, over 300,000 poems in ten languages, augmented with metadata and accessible via a REST API and Python and R libraries. The talk focused on the curation of PoeTree.sl by the authors, highlighting challenges in developing the dataset and its promise for empirical research into Slovenian poetry. After presenting a brief history of Slovenian verse from the 18th century to the contemporary scene, the authors gave a sense of the relative dearth of scientific methodologies in Slovenian literary studies and made the case for more empirical studies of Slovenian verse. This was the impetus for their curation of PoeTree.sl, which contains works from 64 authors in over 5,000 poems, made up of almost 150,000 lines and 875,000 tokens. The corpus was then compared to several other language traditions represented in PoeTree, in terms of scale and diachronic distribution of materials. The Slovenian corpus, while still on the smaller side due to its relatively recent founding, offers some of the most contemporary materials (from the mid-twentieth century through the present) of any of the PoeTree subsites. The talk gave a sense of the metadata captured in the corpus and discussed ways of accessing the data for use in studies. The authors emphasized that their aim is not to create any kind of standard for poetry, neither aesthetically nor methodologically; they offer these materials as a dataset that can be used in support of any number of research projects into Slovenian poetry.

The presentation "A metre-based authorship verification of Ovid's Nux" by *Benjamin Nagy* (IJP PAN, Kraków) and *Rebecca Menmuir* (Queen Mary University, London) (in absentia) explored computational stylometry's role

in reevaluating the authorship of *Nux*, a Latin elegy traditionally attributed to Ovid but widely dismissed as a first-century imitation. Using advanced methods, including the novel Bootstrap Distance Imposters (BDI) algorithm, the study challenged current assumptions, suggesting the poem may genuinely be Ovid's work. *Nux*, which portrays a walnut tree lamenting its mistreatment, is often interpreted as an allegory for Ovid's exile, with the tree symbolizing the poet, the nuts representing his works, and the landowner standing in for Augustus Caesar. If authenticated, *Nux* would provide valuable insights into Ovid's exile period, reflecting his personal struggles and his poetic engagement with political power. The study used the *Consolatio ad Liviam*, a well-known imitation of Ovid, as a control text for testing the methods. Standard computational techniques examined metrical patterns, n-gram frequencies, and lexico-grammatical structures. BDI, a refined extension of the General Imposters algorithm, excelled due to its enhanced interpretability and low false-positive rate, making it particularly effective for authorship verification tasks. The results conclusively identified the *Consolatio* as non-genuine and strongly supported *Nux*'s authenticity, aligning its stylistic markers with Ovid's known corpus while contrasting them with confirmed imitations. BDI's precision demonstrated its potential for broader literary analysis. The study underscored how computational stylometry can reshape classical literary research, offering new ways to resolve long-standing debates and deepen our understanding of ancient texts through rigorous authorship verification.

The talk by *Levente Seláf*, *Villő Vigyikán* (both of ELTE University, Budapest) and *Margit Kiss* (HUN-REN Institute for Literary Studies, Budapest) was entitled "Humour and Parody by the Rhymes in Hungarian Poetry" and presented by Levente Seláf. It considered the evolution of rhyme in Hungarian poetry, a rather complicated stylistic feature that underwent striking changes during the 16th century: from strophes containing only non-rhyming lines it reached the level of highly complex rhyme-topoi; and another change of paradigm during the 19th century. This vivid talk, accompanied with a number of carefully chosen poetic examples, showed the further evolution of this rhyming tradition (which kept growing stronger and eventually became a sufficient marker for poetry together with rhythm), as well as the ironic potential of rhyming in later periods. The study focused in particular on (1) echoing rhymes and their use for humorous purposes, (2) the uses of identical and homophonic rhymes as imitation and parody of earlier versification patterns, and (3) computational analysis of identical and homophonic rhymes from the 16th century to the 1930s. The analysis was aimed at measuring the quality of rhyming, which depended primarily on whether the rhymes under consideration were made by suffixes (an easy way of rhyming, as Hungarian is an agglutinative language) or

were more sophisticated. Humorous poems in general did not turn out to have higher score (and thus better quality of rhyming), probably because only the last three syllables of the poetic line were measured. However, some authors (like Dániel Varró), or certain humorous genres, such as Hungarian limericks, or late 19th-century satirical poems, score highly and thus demonstrate that there is indeed some connection between humour and quality of rhyme.

Maria-Kristiina Lotman and *Rebekka Lotman* (both of the University of Tartu) delivered their paper, "Humour and rhyme", on Estonian material from different periods, from 19th-century written poetry to oral rap poetry. The authors' starting point was the different functions that rhyme can have in humorous poetry: assertion of the validity of humour, punchline enhancement, and comical semantic pairing. Phonic correspondence between words activates certain fields of meaning in rhyme partners, which either correlate with each other, thereby intensifying the meaning, or contrast or even oppose each other. The authors' analysis is based on existing humour classifications, supplemented and specified as needed. The rhyming techniques of various Estonian poets were analyzed with respect to what comedic effects can arise in rhymes, and how: i.e., how humour is created in rhymes, on which level and in which context rhyme humour occurs, and what devices are applied and mechanisms used. As a result, a detailed classification of rhyme humour was presented. The cases where the humorous effect is created by the form of the rhyming word on a metapoetic level were distinguished from those cases where the humour arises from the meaning of the rhyming word, i.e., the joke emerges on a significative level; rhyming words that create humour at both levels simultaneously were considered as a separate group. Allowance was also made for code switching, e.g., when foreign words are set in rhyming position to increase the rather poor Estonian rhyme, and obscene words, which are also a valid source of humour.

In his presentation titled "Toward a statistical analysis of 'rhyme' in ancient Greek poetry, with special reference to humour", *Leon Wash* (Trinity College, Dublin) challenged the long-held consensus that rhyme is absent from ancient Greek poetry, along with the narrower claim that rhyme was used for comic effects, especially in the speech of drunk persons. By incorporating close textual analysis and computational methods, the study highlighted the presence of rhyme-like effects including what the Greeks called *homoioteleuton* (like-ending), which were previously overlooked or undervalued, especially in early Greek poetry due to cultural biases equating rhyme with less noble poetic traditions. The presenter and a collaborator, Keith Begley (Dublin), developed their own Python tool to track end-rhyme in poetry of any meter as well as leonine rhyme in hexametric corpora. Using a working definition of rhyme

based on phonological and metrical correspondence, the analysis covered major hexametric and elegiac authors such as Homer, Hesiod, and Theognis, as well as authors in other meters, such as Pindar, Euripides, and Aristophanes. The investigation also examined the potential relationship between rhyme and humour, considering comic and/or sympotic (i.e. related to the symposium) contexts. The study identified certain patterns of rhyme-like phenomena in different texts including slightly higher frequences in some comic and sympotic corpora, as well as occasional clusters of rhyme, with notable examples from the *Iliad*, *Theogony*, and Euripidean drama. Evidence suggests that rhyme played a heightened role in comic and sympotic genres and contexts, but since it appears also in serious and didactic genres and contexts, it seems to have had a multifaceted role in the poetic tradition.

In her talk, "'Ah que c'est bien rire aux éclats': A cartography of humour in French poetry of the First World War", *Julia Ribeiro S C Thomaz* (Digital Humanities Research Hub – School of Advanced Study, University of London) presented her metrical and stylistic analysis of the long-silenced corpus of French poetry of the First World War. She traced the story of its silencing from Paul Aeschimann's assertion in 1925 that the First World War had had no impact on poetry, to the digital humanities project *Poésie Grande Guerre* (PGG; https://pgg.parisnanterre.fr) that demonstrated, during the Centenary commemorations, the existence of a significant corpus of French poetry of the First World War, by around 600 known poets, which comprises over 450 collections and includes many humorous poems, showing that humorous verse indeed has a place in a war. The PGG database is helpful in working with questions such as who the poets were, what they wrote during the war, and where they published. The author's thorough metrical and stylistic analysis shows that trench newspapers were very humour-conscious, i.e., they were either filled with humorous verse or the poets consciously avoided humour; there was a clear division between those poets who were conscious about the metre and those who were not (partly coinciding with the division between those poets who had published before the war and those who had not). Dr. Thomaz also demonstrated that there was some revival of historically French metrical forms related to the French national idea. Finally, she also discussed a number of computational tools for further research of the poetic corpus.

The talk by *Hilofumi Yamamoto* (Tokyo Institute of Technology) and *Bor Hodošček* (Osaka University), "Visualization of humorous rhetoric contexts in classical Japanese poetry", was concerned with using a visualization system to verify whether the humorous rhetorical patterns found in Kokinshu (ca. 905) can be applied to other anthologies of classical Japanese poetry. Classical Japanese poetry (*waka*; lit. Japanese songs) is a fixed form of poetry with 31

syllables and a 57577 rhythm. Historically, there were many collections of poetry, such as the Manyoshu (ca. 759), the Kokinshu, and the Shinkokinshu (ca. 1205), published under the order of Emperors. *Waka* in those periods was mainly poetry recited for solemn occasions in the imperial court. Therefore, the humour is expressed secretly and is subtle. This intricately illustrated paper focused on poems about the nightingale or warbler (*uguisu*), using the Hachidaishu as its material, and applying the cooccurrence weighting method, or *cw*. The method calculates the weight of patterns of any two words occurring in a poem sentence. The humorous rhetoric in the context of the warbler, as found in the commentary, was visualized in a graph. Although one can get a general idea of the context and anecdote related to each warbler by looking at the visualisation, it is important to go back to the *waka* poem on which it is based and confirm the context of the humour (as was thoroughly demonstrated by the authors). To this extent, the visualized graphs contributed to the detection of humorous *waka* poems and were found to be effective as a means for understanding the context of humour.

The presentation by *Artjoms* Šela (Institute of Czech Language, Czech Academy of Sciences), *Benjamin Nagy* (Institute of Polish Language, Polish Academy of Sciences), *Mirella De Sisto* (Tilburg University), *Wouter Haverals* (Princeton University) and *Petr Plecháč* (Institute of Czech Language, Czech Academy of Sciences) titled "Metronome: tracing variation in poetic meters via local sequence alignment" introduced a novel unsupervised method for detecting structural similarities in poetic meters across languages and historical periods. The study emphasized the significance of understanding prosodic templates and their evolution, presenting the innovative tool Metronome, an unsupervised method for detecting structural similarities in poetic meters across languages and historical periods. Using local sequence alignment based on the Smith-Waterman algorithm, the tool encodes poetic texts into sequences of prosodic features (stress patterns, word boundaries, line breaks) and calculates distances based on weighted symbol mismatches. This enables clustering of poems based on rhythmic structures, revealing both micro- and macro-variations in verse. Three case studies illustrated its application: analysis of Catullus' poetry highlighted metrical shifts linked to stylistic and cultural changes; the diffusion of the 10(11)-syllable meter across Romance and West Germanic languages revealed prosodic adaptations driven by cultural exchange; comparative analysis showed cross-linguistic patterns in 18th- and 19th-century Czech, German and Russian verse, underscoring stable metrical traditions. Metronome outperformed baselines in meter detection tasks, proving its versatility across linguistic systems. Beyond meter analysis, it holds potential for studying stanzaic forms, rhyme schemes, and poetic

evolution. This research demonstrates how computational tools can deepen our understanding of poetic form, bridging linguistic precision and literary interpretation.

The presentation "It Do the Poets in Different Voices, or 'Il Miglior Fabbro': Generative-AI Voices and the Archive" by *Chris Mustazza* (University of Pennsylvania) and *Valentina Colonna* (University of Granada), examined the creative and playful use of generative-AI voices in the context of poetic audiotexts, focusing on the implications for literary and acoustic analysis. The key case study was Charles Bernstein and Davide Balula's collaborative work *Poetry Has No Future Unless It Comes to an End: Poems of Artificial Intelligence*. This project involves AI-generated poems and a synthetic clone of Bernstein's voice, creating a unique intersection of technology and poetic performance. The presenters discussed the two-phased creation of the project. In the first phase, over 70 poems were generated using a corpus of Bernstein's writings. The second phase involved synthesizing Bernstein's voice using recordings from the PennSound Archive. The AI-generated poems were then performed using this synthetic voice, producing an innovative, multilayered artistic product. The authors employed a phonetic and prosodic analysis to compare the AI-generated voice with live performances by Bernstein. Drawing on works by Valentina Colonna and her co-authors, the analysis explored acoustic characteristics that contribute to the uncanny effect. Subtle deviations in prosody and articulation were highlighted as key markers of artificiality. The notion of the uncanny, as discussed in literary and performance studies, was central to the analysis. The synthetic voice's near-verisimilitude prompted reflections on historical and theoretical conceptions of the poetic voice. The presenters argued that this technological simulation offers new insights into how voice and identity are constructed and perceived in literary contexts. They also explored how comedic effects emerged in the AI's sonic delivery, despite its lack of understanding. This contrast highlighted the complexities of human-machine interaction in creative expression. The presenters used prosodic analysis tools from Colonna's *Voices of Italian Poets* project to compare recordings. They examined the AI-generated voice, Bernstein's studio readings, and his live performances. The analysis showed that Bernstein's readings exhibited a wide range of pauses and intonations, including interrogative, exclamatory, declarative, and continuative forms. In contrast, the AI voice displayed more homogeneous pauses and a limited range of intonations. The presentation concluded that generative-AI voices open up compelling avenues for the study of poetic performance, particularly through acoustic analysis and theoretical inquiry.

Pablo Ruiz Fabo (Université de Strasbourg) presented his paper titled "Aspects of Comic Verse Salient to Non-Specialized Large Language Models", which examined how LLMs like GPT-3.5 Turbo and GPT-4 Turbo engage with humour in Spanish comic verse. The study evaluated the models' ability to classify poems as humorous or serious, explain their reasoning, continue poetic lines, and identify authors and historical contexts. A dataset of 50 comic and 50 serious Spanish sonnets from the 15th to 21st centuries served as the testing corpus. The prompts encouraged the models to provide structured responses in JSON format, with temperature and top-p values set to 1 for balanced creativity. The LLMs frequently identified humour through features like incongruity, absurdity, exaggeration, odd vocabulary, and sound repetitions. They occasionally referenced rhythm and metrics but struggled with subtler forms of humour such as irony, punchlines, or culturally specific references. Poems with nostalgic or reflective tones were usually classified as serious, though misclassifications were common, reflecting the models' tendency toward generic but plausible explanations. Lexical ambiguities, archaisms, and references requiring cultural knowledge often eluded the models. Testing revealed that memorization of the corpus was unlikely, as only one author was correctly identified across all 100 poems. Poem continuation tasks also proved challenging, with only well-known works like Quevedo's *A una nariz* generating recognizable continuations. GPT-4 Turbo consistently outperformed GPT-3.5 Turbo, demonstrating better interpretive accuracy and more nuanced humour detection. Overall, the study highlighted the potential of LLMs for literary analysis, while emphasizing the need for improved contextual understanding, particularly for culturally specific and historically rooted humour. The findings suggest that while LLMs can engage with poetic humour on a surface level, deeper literary comprehension remains a critical challenge for future AI development.

The presentation by *Kaarel Veskis* (University of Tartu and Estonian Literary Museum) titled "The Quirks of Culture: Analyzing Absurdity in Estonian Runosongs with AI" investigated the application of Large Language Models (LLMs) for analyzing Estonian runosongs, a traditional oral poetry form characterized by archaic and dialectal language. The study focused on a corpus of 800 runosong texts from the Kodavere parish, examining elements of absurdity through quantitative and cluster analysis. The research demonstrated significant correlations between absurd elements and various textual features, including text length, lexical density, and specific morphological markers such as predeterminers and superlative adverbs. Thematic correlations were also identified, particularly with themes of transformation and death. The study revealed that these absurd elements served functions beyond mere humor,

often challenging conventional perceptions and evoking strong emotional responses, particularly in texts involving mythological narratives or dramatic transformations. The analysis led to a classification system for types of absurdity, resulting in 15 distinct clusters, with the model demonstrating capability in detecting nuanced categories like anthropomorphism, ironic contrast, and surreal visions. Despite challenges with dialectal language processing, the LLM showed promising results in analyzing archaic Estonian texts. Notably, when tested against manually assigned runosong types, the model successfully identified original classifications in 67% of cases, suggesting potential applications for improving runosong database typology. The methodology combined GPT models for text analysis and classification with Python's Stanza for morphological analysis, demonstrating how AI tools can support traditional folkloristic research while emphasizing the importance of careful evaluation when automatically analyzing dialectal and archaic texts.

Mihhail Lotman (University of Tartu) presented a paper entitled "Humour in Russian Comic Poetry and Verse Structures". The presentation explored the interplay of humour and poetic forms in Russian comic poetry, particularly focusing on the 18th and early 19th centuries. It analyzed mechanisms such as incongruity, parody, obscenity, and sound play, which contribute to the comic effects in genres ranging from burlesque to 'chastushkas'. Chastushkas are short, often anonymous songs blending rhyme, humour, and obscene themes, and they are used as a tool for satire and social commentary. Lotman illustrated by example how absurdity and taboo-breaking evoke humour. Humour was examined via its linguistic and structural dimensions, emphasizing: incongruity (juxtaposition of high and low styles, as seen in mock-heroic and travesty poetry); soundplay (techniques like parallelism, rhyme, reduplication, and rhythm which contribute to hidden or overt humour); and obscenity (the use of vulgar language and themes, particularly in chastushkas, combining literary form with taboo content). In 18th-century poetry, there were two main forms of incongruity: travesty (burlesque) and mock-heroic (héroï-comique) poetry. In travesty, high content was presented in a low style, while in mock-heroic poetry, scandalous stories were presented in an epic style. In Vasily Maikov's poem "Elisey, or Bacchus, enraged" ("Елисей или раздраженный Вакх", 1771), written according to all the canons of high epic, the scandalous adventures of a coachman are narrated, first in a tavern, then in a brothel. The study also examined comic effects related to sound play, including cases of hidden humour. Its findings highlight the importance of genre evolution from folk verse to literary parodies; comic poetry as a reflection of broader cultural shifts; and linguistic creativity which showcases humour as a tool for linguistic experimentation and cultural expression. Lotman's presentation

showed how Russian comic poetry illustrates the richness of humour embedded in linguistic and poetic traditions.

Farid Benmezal and *Lynda Chouiten* (both of the University of Boumerdès) presented a paper entitled "Pun and Secularity in Wallace Stevens' Poetry". The presentation explored the use of puns in Wallace Stevens's poetry as a vehicle for articulating his theory of poetry. Stevens's work seeks to address the secular spirit of modernity, offering an alternative to the metaphysical frameworks of traditional religions. His concept of "supreme fiction" embodies this alternative, positioning poetry as a means to provide secular comfort and meaning in an age of disbelief. The early twentieth century witnessed a marked decline in traditional spirituality, creating a void in the quest for meaning. Stevens aimed to fill this void by crafting poetry that reflected the secular realities of modern existence. Puns play a crucial role in Stevens's poetry, offering nuanced layers of meaning that support his poetic theory. The presentation highlighted the interplay between linguistic precision and imaginative ambiguity in his use of puns. The authors listed the verse *Air is air* as an example of Stevens's multi-layered use of language, which uses the literal meaning of the word – the invisible substance surrounding the earth, representing reality – and at the same time a pun on French "air", which suggests a musical tune, art in general, and poetry in particular. This dual meaning encapsulates Stevens's vision of poetry as grounded, while simultaneously engaging the imagination. The talk proposed further analyses of similar instances where Stevens employs puns to demonstrate the interdependence of imagination and reality in his work. Stevens's poetry constructs meaning by balancing the imaginative with the real. This synthesis replaces traditional religious doctrines with an aesthetic framework for understanding existence, whereby poetry becomes a means of redemption in a disenchanted world, providing solace and meaning through artistic expression. The presentation concluded that Stevens's use of puns is central to his poetic theory, illustrating how language can serve as a bridge between imagination and reality. This analysis underscores the enduring relevance of Wallace Stevens's work in addressing fundamental questions of meaning, language, and artistic creation in the modern age.

The presentation by *Irakli Khvedelidze*, *Salome Lomouri* and *Ketevan Khubulava* (all representing the Digital laboratory of the Shota Rustaveli Institute of Georgian Literature at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University) explored computational analysis of humorous elements in Georgian poetry, focusing on contemporary poets Vakhtang Javakhadze, Ela Gochiashvili, and Tariel Chanturia. Using CATMA (Computer Assisted Text Markup and Analysis), the study examined how poetic devices such as meter, rhyme, tropes, and cognitive processes evoke humour in their works. The dataset

comprised 11 to 13 poems from each poet, primarily from the 1980s, demonstrating how computational methods can illuminate the complexities of poetic humour. The analysis revealed diverse humour techniques, including puns, irony, sarcasm, and narrative twists. Tariel Chanturia's poetry often featured playful rhymes with semantic depth, such as linking "Mercedes" with "On Mars I set" or "Jokeri" with "John Kerry" to blend absurdity with sociopolitical critique. Chanturia favoured short meters like 6- and 8-syllable lines, creating a dynamic rhythm that heightened comedic effects. Ela Gochiashvili, in contrast, used free verse and shifting meters to balance humour with nostalgia and emotional complexity. Her poem "Maria" intertwined vivid descriptions and unconventional language to evoke both amusement and empathy, reflecting themes of memory and identity. Vakhtang Javakhadze's work employed irony and sarcasm to critique social and political issues, often using structured meters and rhyme schemes for pointed, satirical commentary. By tagging poetic features like meter or stanza structure and mental processes, the study identified correlations between poetic forms and cognitive expressions. Classical meters emphasized rhythmic regularity and thematic clarity, while free verse highlighted introspection and linguistic experimentation. This research underscored the richness of Georgian poetic humour, illustrating how computational tools like CATMA can deepen the literary analysis of cultural narratives and artistic expression.

The presentation "Fiddling with the JIGS (Joke-like Incongruity Gathering System)" by *Anne-Sophie Bories*, *Nils Couturier*, *Pascaline Loricourt* (all from the University of Basel), and *Petr Plecháč* (University of Basel and Institute of Czech Literature, Czech Academy of Sciences) introduced JIGS, a tool for annotating linguistic incongruities and overlapping meanings in textual material. Since humour is conceptually elusive, systematically defining and analyzing jokes poses unique challenges, particularly in literary corpora. JIGS focuses on linguistic incongruities rather than subjective interpretations of humour, drawing on Victor Raskin and Salvatore Attardo's General Theory of Verbal Humor. This theory identifies six Knowledge Resources (KR) essential for understanding incongruities: Language (LA), Narrative Strategy (NS), Target (TA), Situation (SI), Logical Mechanism (LM), and Script Opposition (SO). These elements form the theoretical basis for the system's annotation framework. The project involved manually annotating an XML corpus of poems and songs, both humorous and non-humorous. The annotation process included selecting descriptors (such as script oppositions and narrative strategies), analyzing ambiguities (like metaphors and layered meanings), and refining protocols through iterative cycles. Three annotators alternated between individual tagging tasks and collaborative discussions, ensuring

increased consistency and better descriptor application. Interannotator agreement, measured with F1 scores, improved significantly through repeated refinements. The study also explored 'Joke-like Patterns Without Humour,' including ambiguous metaphors, intertextual references, and nonsensical language. Defining the boundaries of incongruity proved difficult, especially when dealing with irony and meta-jokes. Nevertheless, the annotated data highlighted recurring incongruity patterns and mechanisms, demonstrating the system's versatility in capturing linguistic subtleties. Overall, the JIGS tool offers a structured approach to studying incongruity, enriching both humour research and broader linguistic analysis through its theoretically grounded and methodologically robust framework.