



Negotiating Gender and Power: A Pragmatic Analysis of Humor in *Crazy, Stupid, Love*

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Abstract

This study analyzes the interplay of gender and humor in *Crazy, Stupid, Love* (2011) through a pragmatic examination of four key scenes. Using Rapp's (1951) humor taxonomy, including ridicule, self-deprecation, and riddles, it explores how humor functions to reduce tension, assert power, reinforce solidarity, and soften face-threatening acts. The research applies speech act theory, showing how expressives, commissives, directives, and assertives add comic depth to exchanges. A clear gendered distinction emerges: male characters, like Jacob, use humor to project dominant masculinity and social assurance. In contrast, female characters, such as Hannah, employ sarcasm and indirect ridicule to assert authority while protecting their social face. Ultimately, the study concludes that the film uses humor not merely for comedy, but as a pragmatic tool to negotiate power, reconstruct gender identities, navigate social relations, and affirm cultural communication norms.

Keywords: humor, types, functions, pragmatic approach, gender.

تفاوض الجندر والسلطة: تحليل تداولي للفكاهة في فيلم جنون، غباء، حب

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المستخلص

تحلل هذه الدراسة التفاعل بين الجندر والفكاهة في فيلم "جنون، غباء، حب" (٢٠١١) من خلال فحص تداولي لأربعة مشاهد محورية. وباستخدام التصنيف الفكاهي لراب (١٩٥١)، الذي يشمل السخرية، والانتقاص الذاتي، والألغاز، تبحث الدراسة في كيفية عمل الفكاهة لتخفيف التوتر، وإثبات السلطة، وتعزيز التضامن، وتليين الأفعال المهددة لماء الوجه. وتطبق البحث نظرية أفعال الكلام، موضحة كيف تضيف الأفعال التعبيرية، والتعهدية، والتوجيهية، والإخبارية عمقاً كوميدياً للتداولات. تبرز تباينات جندرية واضحة: فالشخصيات الذكورية، مثل جيكوب، تستخدم الفكاهة لإبراز ذكورة مهيمنة وثقة



اجتماعية. في المقابل، تستخدم الشخصيات الأنثوية، مثل هانا، السخرية والتوبيخ غير المباشر لتأكيد السلطة مع حماية مآتها الاجتماعية. وتخلص الدراسة في النهاية إلى أن الفيلم يستخدم الفكاهة ليس فقط كأداة للكوميديا، بل كأداة تداولية لتفاوض السلطة، وإعادة تشكيل الهويات الجندرية، والتنقل في العلاقات الاجتماعية، وتأكيد معايير التواصل الثقافية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الفكاهة، الأنواع، الوظائف، المدخل التداولي، الجندر.

1. Introduction

Humor is a significant tool in language, as it expresses several linguistic functions. It is also a means of entertainment and social integration. Humor acts as a very important element in films, especially in romantic comedies. Many times humor intersects with the concept of gender, where it challenges and reflects community norms about males and females. The selected film serves as a valuable example of these intersections. This research attempts to examine the complex relationship between humor and gender in the film *Crazy, Stupid, Love*. To analyze the types and functions of humor, the study follows a pragmatic method, one that focuses on how what someone says is communicated by the speaker or writer and understood by the listener or reader (Hameed, 2025: 526). The analysis will find out how humor is employed by the characters in the selected scenes to reinforce stereotypes about masculinity and femininity.

To explore this linguistically, the study analyzes *four* different scenes from the film in 2011. Each scene was described, and the humor was analyzed in terms of types and functions of humor, politeness theory of Brown and Levinson (1987), and speech act theory (1976), in addition to gender context. The pragmatic analysis concentrates on types and functions that convey social meanings and different communicative functions. Ultimately, the selected scenes demonstrate how humor serves as a pragmatic tool for managing relationships, controlling social interaction, and creating gender roles.

2. Humor

Humor is fundamentally a social and communicative technique, integral to daily human interaction (Crawford, 2003: 1414). Echoing this view, Mulkay (1988:7) characterizes humor not as an extraordinary event but as an “ordinary, daily activity” in which most people actively participate, possessing an implicit understanding of the conversational skills it requires.

Within spoken discourse, laughter serves as a crucial linguistic signal. Kotthoff (2006:7) emphasizes that laughter particles act as key markers, signaling a speaker's humorous intent and inviting the listener to interpret the message from a non-literal, playful perspective. Thus, laughter is not merely a reaction but an active cue that frames the interaction. Furthermore, for humor to function effectively within a social group, it generally operates within the boundaries of accepted morals and communal taste, ensuring it remains a cohesive rather than a disruptive force (Kotthoff, 2006:17).

3. Types of Humor

There are different documented classifications of humor; the current study adopts Rapp's classification because it heavily relates to various pragmatic



functions. Rapp classifies humor into 9 types. The first type is ridicule, which is typically non-verbal (Raskin,1985:24). According to Rapp, ridicule is the first and most primitive kind of humor (Rapp,1951: 42-43). The second type is deliberate ridicule, which serves as a stand-in for physical assault (Raskin,1985: 24-25). The third type is affectionate ridicule, which evolved into friendly humor (Rapp,1951:57). The fourth type is humor at the speaker's own expense. The fifth type is self-disparaging humor, seen as proof of a mental act that one can overcome deficiencies (Raskin,1985: 22). The sixth type is riddle, proposed to achieve superiority of mind (ibid:23). The seventh is the conundrum. The eighth is the pure pun. Finally, suppression/repression humor, which includes sex and politics, acts as a treatment for societal impositions (ibid:23).

4.Functions of Humor

One significant contextual element of a humor act is the physical environment and culture in which it takes place (Raskin, 1985:5). The study will analyze humor in the film based on these functions:

1. **The social function:** Society determines the conditions for laughter. Humor is a socially constructed convention (ibid:17). Rapp notes "contagion" spreads calm through laughter (1951:52). The main purpose is to produce effects the speaker wants to accomplish directly (Attardo,1994:323).
2. **Physiological and psychological functions:** Laughter helps release extra mental or negative energy (Raskin,1985:19). Strategies include: a) "To defend" for self-defense; b) "To cope with a contextual problem" to address a conversational difficulty (Hay, 2000: 725); c) "To cope with a non-contextual problem" for broader issues like death (ibid: 726).
3. **Teasing:** Teasing includes playfully mimicking behavior and mocking challenges (Eder, 1993:17). It may also be used to build rapport and show solidarity (Hay, 2000: 720). Mulkay defines it as a device for reformulating others' speech (1988: 79).
4. **Solidarity:** Humor creates solidarity. Strategies include: (a) sharing to expose something about the speaker (Hay, 2000: 718); (b) To gain advantage from common experiences (Ziv, 1984 in Hay, 2000: 718); (c) "To clarify and maintain boundaries" to reinforce norms and values (Linstead, 1985 in Hay, 2000: 719-720).
5. **Social Management:** This covers using humor for in-group bonding or out-group rejection (Attardo,1994:323). Examples include:
 - a. **Decommitment:** The speaker can retract his utterance without losing face (Brown and Levinson, 1978: 229).
 - b. **Social control:** employing humor as a social correction (Long and Graesser 1988: 53).
 - c. **"Conveying social norms":** drawing attention to taboos (Nilsen, 1983: 446).
 - d. **"Ingratiation":** to garner attention and foster liking (Long and Graesser 1988: 54).
 - e. **"Discourse management":** termination, initiation, and topic shifting (ibid: 55).
 - f. **"Establish common ground":** determining the hearer's understanding (ibid: 57).



g. **Cleverness:** humor implies cleverness to produce and comprehend (Attardo, 1994:324). h. **Repair:** amusing remarks can diffuse awkward situations (ibid).

i. **Social play:** to promote group cohesion (Long and Graesser 1988: 57). Men use humor for aggression, women for intimacy (Kotthoff, 1986: 22).

5. Speech Acts

According to Searle (1976:3), the functional units of language that do more than just transmit information are called speech acts. They are classified as: *assertives, directives, expressive, commissives, and declarations*, each of which has a unique communicative function. *Assertives*, like claiming or stating, bind the speaker to the reliability of a notion and can therefore be evaluated as true or false (ibid: 10). Similar to ordering or advising, *directives* are attempts by the speaker to persuade the hearer to take action. Promises and threats are examples of commissives, which bind the speaker to a future course of action (ibid: 11). Expressives, like apologizing and thanking, convey the speaker's psychological attitude toward a situation that is assumed to be true (ibid :12). As a final point, declarations, such as declaring war or a person marrying, successfully alter institutional reality just by virtue of their successful execution (ibid:13). Speech acts are crucial to understanding humor and the complex gendered interactions in *Crazy, Stupid, Love*. Through the scenes of the film, it is clear how speech acts are closely related to humor and gendered interactions.

6. Humor and Gender in Films

One important strategy for reflecting and creating gender roles in films is humor. While joking is not a gender-specific activity, it still contributes to societal stereotypes. Gender can be expressed in both overt and covert manners. A certain kind of femininity and/or masculinity can be stylized as an interactional by product in humorous acts. Jokes that contain stereotypes have the potential to subversively or affirmatively bring gender issues to the forefront (Kotthoff, 2006:6).

Women are considered to have a sense of humor if they react to and enjoy humor, not if they come up with it. According to certain studies, women tend to avoid humor in mixed settings and employ it when they are alone (Hay, 2000:718). Crawford remarks that women's humor depends on the current social context and incorporates not just creative spontaneity but also compassion and connection (1989:160). Different types of research indicate that categorizing men as status-oriented and women as solidarity-oriented is simplistic and incorrect. Both genders appreciated wit, creativity, and the caring qualities of humor. Women and men employed similar types of humor.

7. Males vs. Females Speech Styles

Avoiding overt violence is seen as a sign of femininity in many cultures, but being skilled at verbal (and physical) fighting and retaliation is seen as typical of males (Kotthoff, 2006:6). Generally speaking, the performance of femininity involves social support, "caring," and cooperative conversational approaches



(ibid: 14). These researches demonstrated how women's humor fostered familiarity and connection. Women joked about their common experiences of disappointment, dealing with challenging people, and overcoming life's restrictions. Specifically joking about one's flaws might strengthen bonds among those who share them (ibid :15). According to West et al. (1997:119-120) the concept of "womanly" or "manly" behavior is socially formed rather than biologically determined. Language use is a key factor in shaping gender identity. Language actively produces gender inequalities within sociohistorical situations, rather than simply reflecting pre-existing sexist norms. Research on men's talk is gaining traction, recognizing that masculinity and femininity are interconnected. Rather, their meanings are dependent on one another. Men's behavior is equally gendered as women's (Crawford, 2003:1423). In addition, research on men's communication often focuses on how they position themselves in relation to less powerful groups, as masculinity is often associated with power.

8.Power and Politeness Strategies

Female characters frequently employ politeness strategies, more so than other genders, to manage relational distance, preserve autonomy, and mitigate face-threatening acts (FTAs). This aligns with Brown and Levinson's (1987 cited in Fa'aaq and Hassan:2017:14-16) famous theory, which defines FTAs as any action opposing the "face wants" of the hearer or speaker (60-61). Their model rests on two core concepts: "negative face," which is the desire for freedom from imposition and protection of personal territory, and "positive face," which is the desire for a positive self-image and approval from others (p. 61). The core of their work outlines five strategies to lessen FTAs, ranging from direct to indirect:

- (a) Bald-on-record: acting without any effort to reduce the FTA (ibid:69).
- (b) Positive politeness: using strategies that appeal to the hearer's positive face to show solidarity (ibid :70).
- (c) Negative politeness: employing strategies that respect the hearer's negative face to show deference and avoid imposition (ibid).
- (d) Off-record: using indirectness to avoid accountability for the FTA (ibid :71).
- (e) Avoidance: choosing not to perform the act at all (ibid :72)..

9.Methodology

This study uses a practical approach; its nature is interpretive and qualitative. The study analyzes how humor is applied to negotiate, create, and reflect gender roles in the 2011 movie *Crazy, Stupid, Love*. Pragmatics was chosen because it asserts how meaning is constructed in interactions based on context, intention, and social norms, in addition to what is said. The analysis is selective and scene-based. Every scene shows how humor interacts with power dynamics, gender norms, and practical tactics. Four scenes were selected due to their abundance of amusing interactions between male and female characters. The data is directly transcribed dialogue from the film. Three main criteria are used in the data selection process:



1. Humor: There are obvious examples of verbal humor (such as puns, self-loathing, or ridicule) in every selected scene.
2. Interaction between genders: The scenes show gendered communication styles through interactions between male and female characters.
3. Relevance to research objectives: The dialogues serve as an example of how humor serves as a social and linguistic function in interpersonal relationships, which makes them appropriate for pragmatic analysis.

The analysis will follow a systematic framework consisting of five steps:

1. **Identify Humor Types:** Humorous utterances will be categorized according to Rapp's (1951) classification. This step aims to determine the type of humor employed (e.g., self-directed, other-directed, or wordplay).
2. **Analyze Functions:** The identified utterances will then be analyzed to determine their primary pragmatic functions, such as building solidarity, exercising social management, or mitigating tension.
3. **Apply Speech Act Theory:** The utterances will be examined through the lens of Speech Act Theory (Searle, 1976) to classify their illocutionary force (e.g., assertive, directive, expressive).
4. **Evaluate Politeness Strategies:** Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) will be used to assess whether the humor functions as a face-threatening act (FTA) or a face-saving strategy, evaluating its role in mitigating or exacerbating social friction.
5. **Interpret Gender Dynamics:** Finally, each example will be interpreted to explain how the humor either reinforces or subverts prevailing gender norms and expectations, connecting the linguistic analysis directly to the study's focus on gender roles.

10.Data Analysis

This section analyzes four different humorous scenes with a variety of genders and contexts. The analysis of each scene is followed by the scene's script and context description.

1.Scene Text: Jacob Meets Hannah at the Bar

JACOB: I think your friend Hannah is sexy.

(Hannah laughs.) **HANNAH:** You didn't really just say that.

JACOB: Pretty sure I did.

HANNAH: How old are you?

JACOB: Thirty-three next month.

HANNAH: Then you should know by now that cheesy pick-up lines don't work.

(Jacob sits down at their table, uninvited.) **JACOB:** I find you incredibly sexy.

It's a fact, not a cheesy pick-up line. There are many attractive women in this bar — including your friend here — and I've been unable to take my eyes off you, only you, for the past two hours. Again: not a cheesy pick-up line, just a fact.

Answer this quickly, without thinking about your answer: do you find me attractive?

HANNAH: I don't.



JACOB: Yes you do.

LIZ: Yes, she does.

JACOB: I'm an accomplished lover. If you come home with me, I am confident you will leave satisfied. Multiple times.

HANNAH: You've got to be kiddi—

JACOB: We'll make love and it will be amazing. You'll laugh afterwards and say 'I never do this kind of thing.' Then you'll do it again.

HANNAH: Is that so?

JACOB: It is. So now I'm going to ask if I can buy you another drink. If you say yes, we'll have one more cocktail each — just enough to start losing inhibitions, not enough to get sloppy, after all: I promised to satisfy you. That's right. So, here we go, Hannah: can I buy you a drink?

(Hannah and Liz share a look.) **HANNAH:** What do you expect me to say to that?

JACOB: Margarita, rocks, salt.

HANNAH: Wow.

(She stands, grabs her coat and Liz's hand.) **HANNAH:** Okay, time to go.

Contextual Description

This scene is located in a bar; it is of a mixed gender, with one male and two females. The scene starts when the male character, Jacob, tries to approach the female character and her friend. Jacob's character as a talented womanizer enables him to use sexual humor and bold compliments to seduce Hannah. Hannah's independence and smart character enable her to reject Jacob's flirtation. She mocks his speech and eventually leaves the bar. This scene highlights the gender conflict between masculine authority and witty femininity.

Analysis of the scene

In this scene, Jacob employs deliberate ridicule as a humorous strategy primarily aimed at capturing attention and asserting social dominance. When he states, "I've been unable to take my eyes off you, only you, for the past two hours," he is enhancing reality in order to amuse and impress. His exaggerated statements about "I'm an accomplished lover... you will leave satisfied. Multiple times," where he uses overt sexual phrases and promises Hannah's fulfillment, undermining typical dating scripts while mocking Hannah's doubts. This is a purposeful use of **deliberate ridicule**, since Jacob designs his lines to entertain, provoke, and disrupt. In this scene Hannah's answers to Jacob's sexual requests take the form of the repression humor type. Hannah's humorous answers remove the imposition in Jacob's sexual utterances. Her answers were direct sarcastic sentences that refused any attempt at flirting, such as "How old are you?", "I don't," "You've got to be kiddi," and "Then you should know by now that cheesy pick-up lines don't work." She also used affectionate ridicule a little. Jacob's humor serves different functions in this scene. He uses the ingratiation function to approach her and attract her attention. Also social function (extending boundaries and trying to take control of the conversation).



And psychological function (showing Jacob's superiority and confidence). Hannah uses the social control function to embarrass Jacob and as a social correction strategy. Hannah responds, “You've got to be kiddi—,” undermining Jacob's arrogance and signaling her independence. She also expresses control and builds up solidarity roles (keeping in touch with her mate Liz).

In terms of gender communication, Jacob represents the stereotypical dominated male who asserts control through sexual humor, directness, and inserting himself by force. He also exhibits hegemonic masculinity, employing humor to demonstrate talent and charm. Hannah, on the other hand, deliberately challenges male superiority, demonstrating female relational negotiation. Her laughter and caustic notes undermine Jacob's authority, establishing her as a participant rather than a passive recipient of his attempts. From a **politeness strategies perspective, Jacob regularly ignores the traditional style of indirectness or vagueness in building up relations. He uses a bold, on-record strategy, which indicates his bold and daring character: “I find you incredibly sexy.”** Jacob threatens Hannah's negative face by imposing himself to approach her with his direct style of speaking. Otherwise, Hannah employs negative politeness to soften her refusal with humor. Although Jacob threatens her face with his direct impositions continuously, with her intelligence, she could save her face again. She ended the utterance with a bold, on-record strategy by switching from a gentle refusal to a direct, firm closing for the subject, “Okay, time to go.” In terms of speech act theory, Jacob's utterances are mainly meant to seduce and persuade. He uses: **directives “Can I buy you a drink?”, assertives “I find you incredibly sexy”, and commissives “I am confident you will leave satisfied”.** On the contrary, Hannah's utterances indicate her rejection and resistance, both strictly and gently. She uses directives to end the conversation “time to go” and assertives to totally disagree with him “I don't”. **Humor in this scene shows how ridicule can act as a pragmatic strategy where Jacob uses it to practice masculine seduction and domination while Hannah uses it to resist male power and authority and to preserve her independence as a female.**

2. Scene Text: Jacob Meets Cal at the Bar

JACOB: I'd like to buy you a drink, Cal.

CAL: I already have a drink.

JACOB: Let me buy you a drink, Cal.

CAL: Okay.

(Jacob motions to the Bartender who NODS. Cal sits.)

CAL: My wife is cheating on me with—

JACOB: David Jacobowitz, yes, Cal, I've heard. We've all heard. For the last two nights, I've watched you batter every poor soul in this bar with your sad-sack loser sob story.

(Cal takes this in. He stands.)



CAL: You know what, I don't need this crap—

JACOB: Sit down, Cal.

CAL: Okay.

(Cal sits. Jacob's that powerful. Cal's that drunk.)

JACOB: Cal, I'm going to make you an offer, it's probably the best offer you're ever going to get, and you're extremely drunk, so it's wildly important that you don't answer until I've finished and you've taken a few moments to process what I'm saying. Do you understand?

(Cal goes to answer, Jacob holds up a finger. Cal stops himself. Once he's settled, Jacob continues.)

JACOB: As I said, I've been watching you for two days now and I can say, without hesitation, that you are the sorriest man I've ever seen in my life – don't interrupt, Cal, it's the truth, and you need to hear it. You're sitting there with your Supercut haircut, getting drunk on watered-down vodka-cranberries like a fourteen-year-old girl, wearing a 41R jacket when you should be wearing a 40L – I don't know if I want to help you or euthanize you – stop drinking out of the goddamn straw, Cal.

(Cal stops drinking from the wimpy red straw.)

JACOB: You asked me for advice before, Cal, so I'm going to help you. I don't know why. Maybe I'm just bored. Maybe all my friends have abandoned me for wives and children and labradoodle puppies, who cares why? Why doesn't matter. The point is, you've got a good face, and a good head of hair, and I'm bored as hell and need a project. So if you want, I'm going to help you rediscover your manhood. Do you remember when it was that you lost it?

(Cal shakes "no.")

JACOB: Doesn't matter, we'll find it. And when we do, when I'm through with you, that wife of yours is going to rue the day she decided to give up on you too early. That's my offer. What do you say?

(Cal stares at him blankly. A long beat of silence. Cal goes for a drink, almost uses the straw... then catches himself. He puts down the drink. Looks up.)

CAL: Yeah, okay.

JACOB: Mall food court, Thursday, six o'clock.

CAL: I'm sorry, what?

Contextual Description

This scene is located in the bar as well, after Cal's wife's confession to him about her affair. The scene features one gender context, including male characters. The scene introduces their tutoring relationship and draws attention to their contradictory personalities. Cal is trying to express his miserable situation and his sadness to anyone in the bar who can be a good listener. Jacob, who is a talented womanizer, contacts Cal and gives him advice about his attitude, and he even criticizes his appearance in a negative way. Cal was drinking; therefore, Jacob even criticizes his habit and drinking. After that, Jacob offers Cal help. Jacob wants to help Cal in order



to rediscover his manhood and masculinity; first of all, Cal refuses that. At the end he agreed. Jacob also wanted to make him an assured person.

Analysis of the scene

In this scene Jacob uses two types of humor: ridicule and deliberate ridicule. Jacob criticizes Cal's appearance in a negative, detailed style. Jacob starts with ridiculing Cal's choice of a drink, his haircut, and his general behaviors. Jacob here uses humor as a pragmatic strategy to establish his superiority by maximizing Cal's flaws and by comparing him to a 14-year-old girl to refer to his weak character. The functions of humor here are social management, specifically the type of social control that tries to cope with a problem by referring to the case. When Jacob mocks Cal, he tries to address Cal's negative impression about himself in order to correct his character. The other function is teasing; when Jacob mocks Cal's flaws and personality, Jacob wants Cal to reformulate his actions and correct them.

Gendered communication is performed overtly by both characters, each in a different way. Jacob represents the stereotypical masculinity. He employs different features such as authority, confidence, and being charming and stylish. While Cal represents the deficiency of masculinity by being desperate, weak, drunk, and insecure. In terms of politeness strategies, Jacob performs different face-threatening acts to Cal. Jacob performed bald on record and reduced the negative politeness; he was intentionally rude and impolite. He mocks, criticizes overtly, threatens, and interrupts. While Cal was avoiding the face-threatening acts completely by being silent all the time or replying with gestures. In the light of speech act theory, Jacobs' sentences function as directives, which include commands such as ordering Cal to sit and drink and stop drinking "Let me buy you a drink, Cal.", "Sit down, Cal.", and "stop drinking out of the goddamn straw, Cal."

Assertives by telling him "you are the sorriest man I've ever seen" and commissives by Jacob's promise to help Cal find back his masculinity "So if you want, I'm going to help you rediscover your manhood". Cal's reluctant responses emphasize his weak and submissive character in addition to his limited power, such as "Okay" and "Yeah, okay." Where he expresses surprise and agreement. Jacob employs humor in this scene in a severe manner. Humor serves as a tool for practicing power and control, and reinforcing gender roles, which is represented by Jacob. Meanwhile, Cal, who is a hesitant character, accepts his position as an obedient figure.

3. Scene Text: Jacob and Cal at the Mall

Cal sees Jacob, standing against a pole in the food court. Jacob is eating pizza, cool as ever. JACOB: You're late.

(then, offering)

Sbarro's?

CAL: No thanks. So what exactly are—



JACOB: How much money can you afford to spend on clothes today?

CAL: I dunno. Five hundred?

JACOB: Three thousand.

CAL: Okay.

JACOB: We'll start with shoes. Let me see those sneakers you're wearing.

Cal holds up his foot.

JACOB: Take them off.

JACOB (chewing): Other one too, please?

Cal does as he's told. Jacob holds out his hands. Cal SHRUGS, hands Jacob the shoes. Jacob simply turns and throws them over the railing.

CAL: What the hell!?

JACOB: Are you in a fraternity, Cal?

CAL: Those were my favorite shoes.

JACOB: ARE YOU IN A FRATERNITY, CAL!?

CAL: No.

JACOB: Are you Steve Jobs?

CAL: What?

JACOB: ARE YOU THE BILLIONAIRE OWNER OF APPLE COMPUTERS?

CAL: No. I'm not Steve Jobs.

JACOB: Then you don't need to walk around in New Balance Sneakers, ever. Let's go.

INT. SHOE STORE – CONTINUOUS ACTION

Cal (barefoot) follows Jacob around the store.

CAL: I think this whole thing might have been a bad idea.

Jacob ignores him, grabs a pair of BLACK DRESS SHOES.

JACOB: Any man can rebuild his entire wardrobe with sixteen simple items.

CAL: Ha! I think I read that in GQ.

JACOB: You did. I wrote it.

CAL: Really?

Jacob CHUCKLES. Cal CHUCKLES back, clearly unsure what the chuckle symbolizes.

JACOB: Numbers one and two: pair of dress shoes, pair of loafers. Cal is looking at a pair of ARGYLE SOCKS.

CAL: I'm sorry, I'm lost: do you really write for GQ?

Jacob slaps Cal's hand, knocking the socks away.

JACOB: Your credit card please?

MONTAGE – FROM STORE TO STORE

We watch as Jacob narrates the wardrobe essentials (and as Cal's arms get progressively fuller) in each store.

Contextual Description

The scene takes place at the shopping mall. This is Jacob and Cal's second meeting; it happens after a while of their first meeting in the bar earlier. This scene is a turning point in Cal's life after Jacob's earlier offer of help. Again, Jacob imposes authority over Cal in clothes choice and even in the physical makeover. As usual, Cal disagrees first; later, he obeys Jacob's commands



because Cal is in bad need of guidance and help. The formulation of Cal in this scene refers metaphorically to the change in his physical appearance and social personality. The scene also features one gender context, including male characters.

Analysis of the scene

The type of humor is deliberate ridicule in this scene. Jacob criticizes Cal in a ridiculous style. Cal is offended by being referred to as having an old-fashioned taste in style. Jacob also starts to ask sarcastic irrelevant questions such as “Are you Steve Jobs?” and “Are you in a fraternity?” Those offensive utterances maximize Cal's deficiencies in his personality, and also they create a sense of humorous relief. Humor serves different types of functions in this scene. Social function, it maintains Jacob's power and dominance over Cal. The other function is psychological, specifically the type “to cope with contextual problem”; it creates motivation to agree with transformation for Cal. This type of function addresses the problem in a certain context and intends to solve it. The psychological function forces Cal to face his deficiencies. It also enhances solidarity through their mentor relationship. Jacob's direct orders and threats serve as motivation for Cal to join in his own physical and social transformation.

Gender communication is crucial because Jacob represents masculinity by his high level of self-esteem, charm, style, power, and dominance. While Cal's submissive, indecisive behavior and lack of physical appearance reinforce the traditional standards of failing masculinity. In this scene, politeness strategies are also reduced purposefully when Jacob uses bald-on-record face-threatening acts with Cal. Jacob performs face-threatening acts when he hits Cal's hand, practicing authority and power over him, and explaining it through mentorship, and commanding him to take off his shoes. While Cal uses the "off-record" indirect politeness strategy to break free from the face-threatening act. He objects to Jacob's direct statements and actions first, but later he agrees with him. In terms of speech acts, Jacob's utterances serve as directives, such as ordering Carl to follow him and to take off his shoes “Take them off.” ; commissives, such as offering help with physical transformation “How much money can you afford to spend on clothes today?” ; and representatives, such as defining fashion norms and lifestyle information “We'll start with shoes. Let me see those sneakers you're wearing.”

Whereas, Cal's reluctant cooperation and occasional humorous comments reflect his submissive character and insufficient social learning. In general, humor in this scene works as a device of transformation and as a signal of power control, integrating ridicule, mentorship, and masculinity into a comprehensive phase of Cal's evolution.

4. Scene Text: The Backyard Confrontation (fight)

TRACY: Well, might as well wait for your daughter.

CAL: She's right next to you, T.

TRACY: No, your other daughter.



(Just then...)

VOICE (O.S.) :Hello?

(From inside the house steps out... HANNAH.)

CAL: Nanna!

HANNAH: Hi, Daddy.

CAL: WTF!

(And right behind her... JACOB. Holding a bottle of wine and smiling like an idiot. Everyone freezes.)

JACOB: Cal?

CAL: What the hell are you doing here?

JACOB: What the hell are you doing here?

HANNAH: Wait, you two know each other?

TRACY: (still blind) Hi, Nanna.

CAL: Wait, what's going on?

ROBBIE: Hey, Nanna.

JACOB : WHAT THE HELL IS A NANNA!?

HANNAH: It's me, I couldn't pronounce Hannah when I was little — wait, so how do you know my dad?

JACOB: (realizing) Oh, God.

CAL: (freaking) I'M NOT UNDERSTANDING WHAT'S GOING ON HERE!

HANNAH: Dad, this is my boyfriend, Jacob.

CAL: No. No. No. No.

TRACY: I want to see the boyfriend! (struggling with scarves) Can someone please take this off?

JACOB: HOW THE HELL DO YOU HAVE A 24-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER!?

CAL: I WAS SEVENTEEN! SHE WAS OUR SENIOR YEAR HICCUP! IT'S WHY WE GOT MARRIED SO YOUNG!

JACOB: WHY DIDN'T YOU EVER TELL ME THAT?

CAL: YOU NEVER LET ME TALK ABOUT MY CHILDREN!

HANNAH: So you two, like, really know each other?

CAL: No way — you and her... no way. End it, now.

HANNAH: Daddy!!!

JACOB: Well, that's not going to happen.

CAL: Well, then I'm going to murder you.

HANNAH: DAD!

TRACY: (down to two scarves) Will someone please take this goddamn thing off me!

CAL: Robbie, take the goddamn thing off your mother! (then, looking up)

(SLAM! A body flies into Cal and knocks him OUT OF FRAME. It's BERNIE! Behind him, JESSICA runs after her father, screaming.)

JESSICA:

Daddy, no!

(BAM! Bernie lands a solid right into Cal's jaw.)

HANNAH: Daddy!



JESSICA: Daddy!

TRACY: (yanking on blindfold) What's happening?

(Bernie is pummeling Cal.)

BERNIE: I LET HER BABY-SIT FOR YOU, YOU SICK SON OF A BITCH! SHE'S SEVENTEEN!

(Jacob dives in. Tries to pull Bernie off. Bernie nails Jacob with an uppercut!)

HANNAH: Jacob

CAL: (getting pummeled) Bernie, I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE

TALKING ABOUT! *(Bernie picks up a windmill from the miniature golf course, readies to bash it over Cal's head. Jessica throws herself on Cal.)*

JESSICA: Daddy, stop!

(This breaks Bernie's trance. He hesitates.)

JESSICA: He didn't do anything. He doesn't even know—

BERNIE: Know what?

ROBBIE: Know what?

CAL: Know what?

TRACY: (still blindfolded) Robbie, please get this off me!

JESSICA: He doesn't even know that I'm in love with him!

(Robbie stops, turns.)

ROBBIE: With who?

JESSICA: (pointing at Cal) With him.

CAL: Are you pointing at me?

ROBBIE: Are you pointing at him?

TRACY: Who is she pointing at!?

ROBBIE: (processing) Wait: my dad is the older guy you've been seeing?

BERNIE: I knew it.

(He gets ready to pummel some more. Jessica grabs him.)

JESSICA: (to Bernie) He doesn't even know about the dirty pictures I made for him.

ROBBIE: You made him dirty pictures? Oh God.

(Robbie looks to Cal. He's angry, jealous, and brokenhearted all at once.)

ROBBIE: (to Cal) You're the one? You're the one she... (then, furious) You stole my soulmate.

CAL: Wait: Jessica is your soulmate?

VOICE (O.S.): I'm sorry, is Tracy home?

(Everyone turns: DAVID JACOBOWITZ stands in the doorway. He's holding up a sweater in his right hand.)

DAVID JACOBOWITZ: You left your sweater in my car the other night.

HANNAH: Who are you?

DAVID JACOBOWITZ: David Jacobowitz.

JACOB: David Jacobowitz!

CAL: David Jacobowitz!?

DAVID JACOBOWITZ: Is this a bad time—

(WHACK! Jacob levels David Jacobowitz with a right hook.)

HANNAH: Jacob!



JACOB: You know how much misery you've put this poor bastard through!?

(Before Jacob can finish, Cal levels Jacob.)

CAL: Stay the hell away from my daughter.

(Jacob jumps on Cal. David jumps on Jacob. Bernie tries to pull them apart.

Jessica finally gets the blindfold off Tracy. The women and children watch the battle in horror.)

(Cal, Jacob, Bernie, and David Jacobowitz sit side-by-side on the miniature golf hole, bloodied but still. REVEAL: TWO POLICE OFFICERS standing in the center of the yard. One of them finishes writing in a pad.)

POLICE OFFICER #1: Well, okay. That should about do it. Look, I'm just gonna write "domestic disturbance reported but all clear," okay? 'Cause honestly, I don't even know what to put down here.

TRACY: Thank you, Officer.

POLICE OFFICER #1: Just... simmer down, okay? We all have arguments, but if you're gonna fight — just do it inside. Keep it in the family, okay?

(Jacob snorts down a laugh. Cal glares at him.)

CAL: I'll kill you.

Contextual Description

A family gathering at Cal's house erupts into chaos. The scene begins calmly but quickly escalates into a farcical disaster as multiple secrets and conflicts collide at once. Hannah arrives with her new boyfriend, Jacob, to the shock of her father, Cal. This is interrupted by their neighbor, Bernie, who attacks Cal for supposedly assaulting his daughter, Jessica, who then confesses her love for Cal, heartbreaking his son, Robbie. As Cal tries to break up Hannah and Jacob, Tracy's lover, David, arrives, leading to a massive physical fight that is only stopped by the police.

Analysis of the scene

This scene is the most important scene in the film; it represents the climax, where the serious misunderstandings and the dangerous confessions result in verbal and physical conflicts. This scene employs a variety of humorous techniques. The first type is ridicule, where different male characters such as Cal, Jacob, and Bernie use it to insult and attack each other overtly and maximize each other's deficiency. Bernie mocks Cal's claimed immoral behavior, while Jacob makes fun of Cal's real age and him being a father ("HOW THE HELL DO YOU HAVE A 24-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER!?!"). The other type is deliberate ridicule, when Cal mocks Jacob's relationship with his daughter and when Jacob mocks Cal's incapability to control the situation. The third type of humor is the riddle and conundrum. This type is performed by repeating the same statement or the same line; it results in confusion and laughter, such as "What the hell is a Nanna?," and "Who are you pointing at?". Another form of the riddle is when Jessica makes dramatic statements about the dirty pictures, and her dangerous confession of love drives the script into ridiculousness, approximating a riddle-like announcement in which the truth is revealed as an embarrassing punchline.



The last type is humor at the expense of others. The scene's physical humor (Bernie confronting Cal, Jacob hitting David, and the others battling on the grass) reinforces humor at the expense of others.

In this scene, there are different functions of humor. The first function is psychological, specifically the type to overcome a general problem. In this type, humor is used to deal with serious issues or disasters and makes jokes about them. Humor is used to decrease the tension among the family members, where the police officer's statement about the fight ("I don't even know what to put down here") allows the characters to release their feelings to deal with the situation, where they could laugh about a serious awkward fight. The following functions are different subtypes of social management function. Discourse management, where characters exchange turns and start, shift topics, and finish the dialogue within the conflict. For example, many topics have been referred to within the fight, such as Hannah and Jacob's relationship, Tracy's affair, Jessica's crush on Cal, Jessica's father's reaction to his daughter's crush, and Robbie finding out about Jessica's crush on his father. The other function is social control, where characters use violence to threaten and control each other in a funny way. Here humor is used as a type of social correction. Such as Bernie's violent reaction to Cal when he finds out about his daughter's crush on an old man. "I LET HER BABY-SIT FOR YOU, YOU SICK SON OF A BITCH! SHE'S SEVENTEEN!" Another function is expressing social norms. Here the characters use humor to highlight taboo words or some inappropriate attitudes, such as violent behaviors. For example, Jessica's illegal crush on an old man, the taboo words that characters exchange within the fight, and the sexual affairs of the characters. Another function is repair, where Cal uses humorous notes and instructions in order to correct the relationship of his daughter Hannah with Jacob. He intended to end that relationship in the form of achieving repair. "No. No. No.," "No way—you and her... no way. End it, now.", "Well, then I'm going to murder you". One more function is social play, where characters use this function to maintain social bonds, such as Jacob and Cal's relation, where males usually use violent expressions in order to build up control and dominance, such as "HOW THE HELL DO YOU HAVE A 24-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER!?" and "What the hell are you doing here?"

In terms of gender, gender communication is important in the scene. This scene both challenges and supports gender roles. Where characters of both genders performed certain acts that reflected their gendered identity either through utterances or actual acts. Robbie represents the brokenhearted young male; Hannah stands for her independence, and insists on continuing her relationship. Jessica expresses her prohibited desire; Jacob, the self-confident one, turns to a fragile partner, who is trying to defend his relationship. His humor moves from seducing and charming to defensive. Cal turns from the frustrated, oppressed father to a male who has power and authority over his family members; for instance, he threatens Jacob, and orders Robbie to take off the blindfold from



his mother's eyes. Obviously, males intend to accomplish dominance through fighting and overt physical confrontation, while females try to maintain peace and compassion by just being observers. This act exaggerates the gender standards of masculinity.

From a politeness perspective, all the standards collapse. There are different violations (verbal and nonverbal) for both speakers and hearers of both genders. The violation of politeness strategies is mainly performed by male characters for each other more than directed towards the female characters. The female characters generally were either using off-record, which is an indirect strategy used by the speaker to escape the event, or they were totally avoiding the face-threatening acts by completely staying away from the fight. There are physical assaults, screaming, rude direct interruptions, and bald-on-record threats such as "I'll kill you." substitute the face-saving or being indirect. The absolute absence of politeness in this scene shows how the communication turns into chaos. In terms of speech act theory, the dialogue is controlled by performing different types of speech acts. They are contradicted and result in failure in communication. Such as Jessica's declarations, the police officer's final command, Cal's denials of Jessica's confession and his refusal to his daughter's relationship, and Jacob's defensive announcements. Directives ("Take the blindfold off!"), expressives ("I don't even know what's going on here!"), assertives ("She's my daughter," "I'm in love with him"), and commissives ("I'll kill you," "I'm going to murder you"). The scene combines verbal humor and non-verbal physical humor with emotional conflicts. It shows how humor can be either destructive or a building force.

3. Discussion

The four selected scenes from the film *Crazy, Stupid, Love* show how humor functions pragmatically as a critical instrument for negotiating relationships, controlling social interaction, and establishing gender roles. Within the first scene at the bar, Jacob uses the types of humor ridicule and deliberate ridicule. Jacob's smart interruptions and overt flirtations function as mechanisms of persuasion and dominance. On the other hand, Hannah uses affectionate ridicule and repression humor to foil Jacob's flirting attempts. Hannah's direct humorous utterances and laughter at Jacob's demands assert her female identity and independence and reject Jacob's masculine authority over her. Also, her utterances convey politeness strategies that save her face against Jacob's attempts. This interaction illustrates how humor turns into a platform for gender negotiation: Jacob's self-assured masculinity contrasted with Hannah's humorous rejection. Thus, within the light of pragmatics, humor acts as a tool for manipulation that intends to maintain the social interaction while minimizing the resistance. In the scene of the bar between Jacob and Cal, the humor is serious and aggressive (confrontational). It emphasizes how ridicule can be used as a teaching device to reshape male identity. Jacob uses two types of humor, ridicule



and deliberate ridicule, to mock Cal's character, behaviors, and physical appearance in detail. Jacob practices power and authority over Cal, justifying that attitude as being a mentor to help Cal transform into an attractive male. Jacob's humor functions as social control and teasing to motivate Cal to overcome his self-confidence problem and to be a part of that change. These two functions serve as a correction strategy to help Cal's transformation. The mentoring and correcting dynamic is preserved in the mall scene.

Thus, humor mediates social education. The scene illustrates how humor can be used as a strategy for the reconstruction of a male identity. Jacob's dominant and sarcastic turn as a mentor helps in Cal's transition from an insecure character to a confident person. In both scenes Cal acknowledges his deficiencies and accepts Jacob's help, which reinforces the bond between them. In turn, humor minimizes the face-threatening acts between both characters. The final backyard fight scene combines all the different aspects in a chaotic climax. Several characters are involved in interrelated humorous misunderstandings. Such as Jacob's surprise at Cal's daughter, Cal's shock about his daughter's relationship, Robbie's envious bursts, and Bernie's aggressive misconceptions. The dramatic, exaggerated responses turn the disaster into Humor. For instance, repetition of behaviors and utterances, and physical humor. The exaggerated screaming accurately represents Rapp's classifications of ridicule and riddle. Overall, these four scenes demonstrate that humor is a systematic, pragmatic tactic that reduces stress, shows vulnerability, maintains interpersonal relationships, and highlights the fragile condition of strict gender stereotypes.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, humor appears as a dynamic communicative technique. It provides more comprehensive perspectives into social identity and gendered exchange. Analyzing these four scenes indicates that *Crazy Stupid Love* is a pragmatic device that negotiates power and dominance, reconstructing the gender identity of individuals, dealing with social relations, and confirming cultural communication conventions, rather than just being a comic device. Humor emerges in different types, such as riddles, ridicule, deliberate ridicule, and self-expense humor. That function is to maintain solidarity and reduce stress and tension. These types of humor take place within a variety of contexts, which include transition, mentorship, confrontation, flirting, and seduction. The characters' employment of humor shows its significant turn in dealing with balancing human connections, running uncomfortable situations, and challenging or enhancing power. Most importantly, the pragmatic use of humor in the film possibly alters threatening or severe situations into sarcasm. This ensures that conflict of characters acts as a unifying strategy rather than a means of disintegration.

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