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How to (mis)use language: humor, creativity and lexical creation in Rikki Ducornet's *The Stain*, *The Fountains of Neptune* and *Phosphor in Dreamland*

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Introduction

Garde-toi de rire en ce grave sujet.
Boileau

- 1 Humor is generally acknowledged as a notion which escapes definition, as Moura [2010: 1] and Grojnowski [1991: 4] have argued. However, scholars generally agree on the fact that humor is a set of tools that provoke smile or laughter (see Defays [1996: 8-9] and Moura [2010: 9]). This may come from the differences between the multiple referents of the word “humor”, depending on the language¹.
- 2 The difficulty inherent to the definition of humor has not prevented scholars from diverse fields of research from studying it, probably to cope with the fact that research on humor has long been disregarded as not serious enough, or simply not important enough (Grojnowski [1991: 3], Moura [2010: 14], Nilsen & Nilsen [2008: 262]). However, literature and linguistic scholars have issued a number of papers, books and essay collections over the past few years about humor, which shows two things: first, there is indeed an interest for academic research on this subject, and second, research on humor is most prolific in literature and linguistic studies².
- 3 This may come from the fact that, as Moura explains, the literary text is a “privileged medium of humor” [2010: 44, *my translation*]. Because literary texts totally rely on language itself to tell stories, and because as Attardo [2017: 1] argues, “language is the

medium of much humor”; there is indeed a link between linguistics, language, literary texts and humor, a link that mainly comes from lexical creation and creativity.

- 4 Arcand [2017] classifies word creation into three categories: the first plays on the form of words (their sounds and letters), the second on the signifier / signified relation, and the last on the creation of words, signs and meaning. These three categories show that creativity and lexical creation rely not only on the invention of new words. Literary texts are indeed a “privileged space” for word manipulation and lexical creation, and as a consequence they reveal their authors’ creativity through multiple creations of tropes and figures which convey humor, be it on the level of the form of words (with paronomasia and typography, for example), the signifier / signified relation (with all the tropes and figures that involve a form / meaning rupture such as metaphor and syllepsis, but also with intertextual play) or word creation *per se*.
- 5 Nilsen & Nilsen [2008: 246] and Moura [2010: 174] have studied and established exhaustive lists of the tropes and figures of speech that convey humor to literary texts. The main reasons why they convey humor is their incongruity, unexpectedness, ambiguity and exaggeration. Rikki Ducornet, an American novelist, has a very peculiar and deeply imaginative way of writing, which recalls her bond with the surrealist movement and relies a lot on these four concepts; three of her novels in particular are filled with useful examples for the study of the link between linguistics, language, literary texts and humor, namely *The Stain*, *The Fountains of Neptune* and *Phosphor in Dreamland*. This paper will study how Ducornet uses these devices and how linguistic manipulations generate humor in her novels, focusing first on the link between creativity and lexical creation, humor and fictional creation. This will lead to the study of the roles of humor and lexical creation in her novels, and finally to a reflection on the metafictional and metalinguistic comments on language creation displayed by her novels.

1. Creativity at work: language and humor

Non seulement le rire est une rupture, mais le
désordre qu’il génère est créateur.
Grojnowski [1991]

- 6 As Moura [2012: 10] explains:
S’il est vrai que l’humour ne se limite ni à un genre, ni à une forme ou à un ensemble thématique, il n’en demeure pas moins qu’il se manifeste plus particulièrement selon certains processus textuels réapparaissant régulièrement.
- 7 In the first section of this paper, I will study the “textual processes” that regularly appear in Ducornet’s fictions, focusing especially on creation and lexical creativity as elements that trigger humor. Although they are not the only vehicles of humor in her novels, I will focus on the three processes which are in that respect particularly prolific, namely onomastics, interventions of the narrative voice and the use of nonsense.

1.1. Humor through onomastics

- 8 The choice of proper nouns for the characters in Ducornet’s novels is rarely random, especially in the chapters of *The Fountains of Neptune* which tell about the protagonist,

Nicolas, and about his childhood around sailors: the Cod, Bottlenose and Toujours-Là, to name but some of them, “lower” men who are, according to Aristotle, perfect vessels for comedy.

- 9 The humor of these names resides in the way they extract one of the characteristics of the character they refer to, by way of metonymy, and emphasize it in a caricatural way: “Cod” points at the character’s job, while “Bottlenose” and “Toujours-Là” refer to the main activities of these sailors (the first always seems to have his nose in some bottle and the second spends all his time in a bar). The name “Bottlenose” is interesting, because it both uses a synecdoche and a portmanteau word – two of the tools that convey humor, according respectively to Nilsen & Nilsen [2000: 181] and Rouayrenc [2012: 4], because as the reader knows the signs, he is surprised at their new, unexpected meaning. “Toujours-là” underlines another characteristic of Ducornet’s humor, namely the use of French words in novels written in English; as she spent twenty years of her life in France, she very often plays with both the French and the English languages to create delightful puns³ for bilingual speakers, which would not be noticed by readers who are not bilingual. The word plays she uses to create the names of her characters are also humorous because they are so unexpected and incongruous that they come as a surprise for the reader – another characteristic of humor according to Nilsen & Nilsen [2000: 163].
- 10 By choosing specific words, nominalizing them and building compounds that end up as names for her characters, Ducornet gives pre-existing signifiers a whole new signification: she creates a new meaning. Proper nouns can sometimes be creations of the author, as Ballard [1998] argues, and such is the case here: although they are made of already-existing words, they involve puns, which are related to creativity according to Henry [2003: 8]⁴.
- 11 In Ducornet’s novel, the narrative voice even comments on Toujours-Là’s unexpected name through the remark of a secondary character:

(1) “It had never occurred to me this was someone’s name. Toujours-Là! Always there! The man you can be sure to find, day or night, haunting the darkest recesses of the bar.” (p. 149)
- 12 This comment comes as an explanation that confirms why this name was chosen for this specific character: as a consequence, it comes as a resolution of the pun, something inherent to the characteristics of that sort of word play according to Nilsen & Nilsen [2008: 246], but also Attardo [1994: 143] and Triezenberg [2008: 540-541]. At the same time, this remark can also be seen as an explanation of the pun for Ducornet’s readers who do not understand the French language, something the narrative voice very often does so that all readers can understand the recurrent French words used in her novels and the humor they convey.
- 13 But characters’ names are not the only proper nouns conveying humor throughout *The Fountains of Neptune*; indeed, even the names of villages play on onomastics and have a humorous effect. Ducornet uses the names of French villages, namely “La Folie” and “Ste Verge” (p. 102), which already appeared in her first novel, *The Stain* (p. 149). These names, although they do exist in the non-fictional world, acquire in Ducornet’s first novel a new semantic scope as they come to highlight the madness and perversity associated with religion in this fiction. Nicolas, in *The Fountains of Neptune*, “wonder[s]

about the origins of their curious names” (p. 102), thus offering a metatextual comment both on their intertextual origin, and on their humorousness.

- 14 When Nicolas creates a toy world, his imaginary friend Oliver names it “The Kingdom of d’Elir” (p. 171), another creation which relies on the French language, more specifically on the word “*délire*”, maybe the very “madness” announced a few pages before with the village “La Folie”. This pun is based on the homophony between “d’Elir” and “*délire*”, it thus conveys the phonetic and semantic fields to build up “delirious”, humorous place names. As for Ducornet’s American readership, the pun can be understood only a few lines after, when the kingdom is said to be “delirious”.
- 15 The narrative voice in Ducornet’s “D’élirious” novel thus relies on both categories of onomastics, namely anthroponymy and toponymy (Ballard [1998: 2]), that is to say on the creation of proper nouns that point to animate and inanimate referents, to distil humor throughout the narrative. Once her characters are created, the narrative voice sometimes shows an awareness of their ridiculous names, as in *Phosphor in Dreamland*, with this description of Fogginius, the often ridicule mad scientist whose name recalls Jules Verne’s Phileas Fogg: “Fogginius, plagued by perpetual fog, stumbled into the kitchen wanting butter.” (55). The sarcastic remark of the narrator, which points at Fogginius’s obscurantism with a pun on his name, makes him even more ridiculous: the narrator distances himself from the character, and builds a privileged relationship with the reader as they laugh together at Fogginius. The strength of this relationship is also helped by intertextuality⁵, a process which is extensively used by the narrative voice and which is part of the process of creation; indeed, although it uses words and nouns which have been used before by other authors, they are invested with a new meaning in a new context, one which often conveys humor, as is the case with the example of Fogginius. But the role of the narrator does not stop there: the narrative voice also uses creativity and lexical creation to make fun of the characters.

1.2. Interventions of the narrative voice: from creativity to lexical creation

- 16 In *Phosphor in Dreamland*, Fogginius follows his adoptive son Phosphor on an expedition, and they meet a barber who lives in a tree in the forest. Fogginius tries to catch the attention of Phosphor and of the barber as the latter is telling a story:

(2) “If you wish to,” Fogginius said grandly, stroking his greasy head with both hands, “you may wash my hair. One should try anything once, and I know you are sad today. If it will cheer you, well then, have your way with me!” And, horribly, he winked. (p. 96-97)
- 17 The narrator’s comments turn Fogginius into ridicule and make him both laughable and disgusting. The use of the adverb “grandly” is ironical as there is an obvious discrepancy between what is meant and what is said, and it is also hyperbolic as it exaggerates Fogginius’s rhetoric qualities; these two elements, namely the contrast offered by irony and exaggeration, are vehicles of humor in narrative texts as argued by Nilsen & Nilsen [2000: 246; 2008: 169, 118] and Henry [2003: 34-36].
- 18 Another contrast appears in the last comment of the narrator, although it works differently. When Fogginius tells the barber “have your way with me”, he literally means the barber can wash his hair. But when the narrative voice adds “and, horribly,

he winked”, the adverb “horribly” qualifies the wink, which makes the reader go back to the sentence uttered by Fogginus and consider the possibility of a sexual innuendo. The contrast here is thus a semantic one, between the literal and the figurative meaning of Fogginus’s sentence. The adverb “horribly” is emphasized by the punctuation, it stands out thanks to the juxtaposition which reinforces its meaning. This remark conveys the reaction of disgust that Fogginus provokes in the other characters, one that is not incompatible with humor as explained by Nilsen & Nilsen [2008: 248]: “People’s responses to humorous characters can range from pleasant amusement to shock and disgust.” Indeed, the moral and physical ugliness is, according to Baudelaire in *De l’essence du rire*, one of the sources of laughter (p. 6-7). The pun that points at Fogginus’s twisted spirit is a creation of the narrative voice, one which amuses the reader: first, because intentionality in puns is one of the factors that make them humorous (Henry [2003: 10], Attardo [1994: 133]), and second because metanarrative comments are tools that can convey humor (Rouayrenc [2012: 24]).

- 19 The narrator’s lexical creativity also manifests itself in *Phosphor in Dreamland* through unexpected collocations that Rouayrenc [2012: 9] calls “ruptures d’isotopies”: thus the “rotundular air” (p. 55), “pubigerous wig” (p. 96) and “fabulous front gate of tortured iron” (p. 115) associate words in a surprising way. The narrator creates new lexical alliances that the reader does not expect, because these word alliances are not usual collocations; this creates a discrepancy between the usual language the reader is used to and the created language of the narrator, and it is in this gap that humor lies. Occurrences of strange collocations also appear in a narrative technique which is recurrent in Ducornet’s novels, namely lists. The “remedy against lightning” explained by Fogginus is an example of this phenomenon:

(3) “The best remedy against lightning is to wear one’s turds—dried and sewn with a piece of silk—against the heart. The turd is dry, corrupt, combustible, commemorative, and at best, cumuliform—” (p. 64)

This quote is interesting in that the absurdity of Fogginus’s remedy is reflected in the seeming randomness of the adjectives that qualify the noun “turd”; not only do they appear to have been chosen for the sheer pleasure of the sound effect conveyed by the alliteration of the consonant sound /k/, but the collocation of the words is quite unexpected; another instance of the creativity of the narrator that conveys humor. See also this example, taken from *The Fountains of Neptune*, in which Nicolas tells about one of his meetings with Doctor Figuebique:

(4) Once when we met accidentally on the street, Doctor Figuebique bragged about a “difficult” case he was treating simultaneously for “ataxia, aphonia, and autochthonous ideas.” The next time we met it was “dysphagia, dystonia and dystrophy.” Was he memorizing a psychiatric lexicon? “My patient also suffers from echolalia!” he said. (p. 136)

Here the reader is confronted once again with lists of words that seem to rely solely on sound effects (assonance in the first, alliteration in the second), and not on logical meaning, creating a play on sounds which seems to be triggered by that of the doctor’s name itself. In the first list, “ataxia” and “aphonia” are names that belong to the medical domain as they are names of diseases, but the third term of the list is totally incongruous: first the collocation of the words “autochthonous” and “ideas” is unusual and its referent is quite obscure; second the link between this collocation and the two terms that appear before in the list is a mystery. If the second list does use only medical

lexicon, the narrator points to the ridiculous quality of both lists at once with the comment “Was he memorizing a psychiatric lexicon?”, pointing at the fact that the words of each list seem to be chosen by the doctor only because they start with the same letter, not for their medical accuracy, the last remark pointing ironically at his own “echolalia”.

- 20 The narration thus conveys humor through creative puns, word plays and collocations; but there are also a number of instances of lexical creation in Ducornet’s *Phosphor in Dreamland*: “Toothed and tusked!” (p.122) exclaims one of the characters who accompanies Phosphor in his expedition, to qualify Fogginus. The second word is a lexical creation through a derivation process which also plays on sounds with an instance of paronomasia (a device which consists in the use of words whose sounds are close and creates an effect of repetition), and which conveys humor because the reader knows full well that Fogginus is, actually, toothless.
- 21 Creativity, lexical creation and humor are thus inextricably linked in Ducornet’s fiction through the narrator’s word choices (described as “humor enhancers” by Triezenberg [2008: 531-534]) and creations: a specific relationship is built between the narrator and the reader, when they laugh together at the textual incongruities triggered by lexical creation and creativity, something explained by Moura [2010: 28] & [2012: 13-14] when he explores how comedy arises from the interaction of *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*. In her first novel, *The Stain*, Ducornet draws more specifically on the literary tradition of nonsense which participates in building up a fictional world.

1.3. Nonsense: from lexical creation to fictional creation

- 22 In an interview with Sinda Gregory & Larry McCaffery [1998: 138], Ducornet explains why nonsense influenced her own writing so much:

“Nonsense delights us I think because it offers us language in mutation, in gestation –how much richer English is for “brillig” and “snark”!—and because it ridicules pompous, vain, and obsessive behavior.”

- 23 Nonsense both creates language and is humorous as Rouayrenc [2012: 3-4] explains, thus linking lexical creation to humor. Lewis Carroll is one of the many writers who influenced Ducornet, and nowhere is this influence more obvious than in *The Stain*, Ducornet’s first novel, especially through the characters of Gaston and Gontran, the Téton twins. The first time little Charlotte – the protagonist – meets them is striking, because they use a language that neither she nor the reader understands:

(5) “Ka-Ka Cröac!” one twin cried into the ear of the other.
 “Kristmax! Kristmax!” replied his brother, pointing to the sky. And Charlotte thought that it would be a blessing to share a private language that no one else could understand. (p. 70)

- 24 The words that are used by the twins do not exist in common English language, although the reader will hear “croak” in the first, and the second, “Kristmax”, will evoke “Christmas” through the use of paronomasia. These terms sound like onomatopoeias that have been created for the sheer pleasure of sounds, hence the alliteration of the consonant sound /k/. Lexical creation is here related to a language created by the twins, and this is relevant precisely because these characters are also linked to nonsense, although the reference is made explicit further on in the novel:

(6) On her way back to La Folie, Charlotte saw the Téton Twins. They were hanging over the road from the branch of a large walnut tree. Both were wearing wooden shoes, torn knickers and – despite the warm weather – flat wool caps. They also wore large grins; one grin disclosed a chipped front tooth. For a good minute, Charlotte and the twins stared at each other. It was Charlotte who first said:

“Hullo.”

“Quihuitl!” said Gontran.

“Quihuitl!” Gaston echoed.

“K-Qui-huitl!” Charlotte said. [...] The twins, obviously pleased, beamed down at her like two identical men-in-the-moon (one with a chipped tooth). They hung from their branch silently smiling and stared at her with great, round eyes until she felt uncomfortable.

“Uh. Do you want to play?” she asked.

“Ptooh!” Charlotte jumped back. The twins had spat at the ground simultaneously and were shaking their heads emphatically from side to side. Their eyes had narrowed.

“Well,” Charlotte said, piqued, “Well then. Goodbye.”

“Yax snatch!” Gontran corrected her.

“Yax snatch!” echoed Gaston.

“Yax snatch,” said Charlotte, a bit weary; and then, suddenly inspired, she added:

“Kristmax!”

But it was at once apparent that she had gone too far. (p. 100-101)

It is this specific passage that makes the reader link the twins to Carroll’s famous characters Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum: the paronomasia that links their names, their exaggerated and almost theatrical actions, their “grin”, the fact that they stand under a tree and the emphasis put on their “roundness” all remind of chapter IV in Carroll’s *Through the Looking-Glass*, along with their nonsensical language. Humor arises in this passage from the twins’ obvious relation to nonsense literature and from the “words” they create, but also from Charlotte’s inability to take part in their “conversation”. The narrator’s comment at the end of the extract conveys humor because it implies that the word used by Charlotte is inappropriate for the twins (when a few pages before it was not), when this word does not even exist. The discrepancy between the seriousness of the narrator’s tone and the nonsensical term used by Charlotte reinforces the humor of this final remark: here again, humor lies in contrast and surprise, a surprise also triggered by the word “Quihuitl”. This word could recall a bird sound through its sonority or be an allusion to the Aztec language, with the typical “tl” ending. It could even be a transformation of the Aztec word “Quiahuitl”, which means “rain”, pointing at Ducornet’s fascination for ancient cultures, which is revealed through intertextuality in her novels.

- 25 Lexical creation is thus linked to nonsense and to humor thanks to the twins’ invented language. However, the words they create also take on a metafictional role at the end of the novel:

(7) Daily meditation from dawn to dusk revealed that, like a marble, the world was round (as were the sun and moon) and that, like marbles, they had been made to spin. The twins invented Kriegsnatch, a complex game wherein marbles revolved in varying orbits about one another, but were never allowed to touch.

They dug concentric circles into the earth at the base of The Devil’s Finger – which they knew represented the world. And each day, Kristmax, the moon

(old, Old Black One) and Kochipilli, the sun (green, Green Giver) were displaced in an appointed, elegant pattern that was Kramsda (invariable) and based on a simple, mathematical principle they had discovered exploring the delicate corolla of a flower. In this way the years had passed, and the Cosmos had been secure.

But now the world had fallen and they were powerless to lift it up again. A thousand Rastatusks could not have put it on its feet. (p. 166)

This passage describes how the twins proceeded to invent and design a marble game that replicates the solar system. They created a world, and at the same time they needed to invent words. Their lexical inventions are for the first time “translated” into English, while some evoke again the Aztec culture (Xochipili is an Aztec god), and others are allusions to objects (“rasta tuks”): the reader witnesses both a cosmogonic process and the creation of a new language sometimes based on pre-existing words, which directly refers to the process of writing fiction and creating fictional wor(l)ds and reminds the reader that, as Grojnowski [1991: 10] argues, humor is “un ferment qui inspire la création.”

2. Lexical creation and creativity for comic relief

Le mélange du grotesque et du tragique est
agréable à l'esprit.
Baudelaire, “Fusées”

- 26 Ducornet’s novels, although drawing on apparently unlimited imaginary skills, also depict tragic individual and historical events. The most tragic diegetic moments in *Phosphor in Dreamland* and *The Fountains of Neptune* are also the most humorous ones, precisely because humor arises from the contradiction between comedy and tragedy as argued by Grojnowski [1991: 5, 9] and Moura [2010: 105, 135, *translation mine*], who calls humor an “art of in-betweenness”. We will now see how humor arises from this contradiction, and how it is linked to lexical creativity.

2.1. Conveying humor through a shift in narrative tone

- 27 When Phosphor and his fellow explorers meet the barber, he tells them the story of the loss of the lôplôp⁶, a legendary bird which no longer exists, before discussing it with the protagonist:

(8) The loss of the lôplôp’s voice was for the poet a terrible loss. It coincided with the ruination of a dream, and convinced him that his love for Professor Tardanza’s daughter was hopeless. And it was a terrible loss for the barber too, whose existence was now devoid of meaning.

“To care for the last lôplôp,” he confided to Phosphor as they sat together on a slab of volcanic glass overlooking the foaming sea, “imbued my days with sacred purpose. Life, at best, is unstable and fantastic and, for those of my profession, singularly absurd.”

“Come, come!” Phosphor attempted to cheer him.

“Hair is dead,” the barber insisted. “I might as well trim the nails of parakeets, or polish the scales of fish. I scrape it off, I cut it off, I pluck it from the ears—and still it grows back.”

“It’s alive!” the poet said.

“Only at the roots, which, unlike those of lust, cannot be contained.”

“Ah!” said the poet. “Lust. Contained?”

"In youth one must occupy the mind," the barber told him, "else lose it to love. Long ago when I was spurned by a wench I wanted, I holed myself up in my room and wrote a complete History of Wiggery. I came to dream that one day I would be the world's supplier of ecclesiastical wigs. I designed a magnificent papal wig—"

"And so it was!" Fogginus had discovered them; spiderlike he scaled a rock and panting cried: "Eve's apple was a fig!"

"I was telling the poet how I once designed a papal wig!" the barber shouted: "A PAPAL WIG!"

"Nor do I"—his bones popping, the saint embraced the barber warmly—"give a fig for papality!" (p. 95-96)

This passage starts with a tragic tone, but then several phases turn it into comedy: first, there is a discrepancy between the barber's despair and the trivial subject of what the reader finds out to be the actual cause of it: "Hair is dead". Then, the syllepsis when Phosphor exclaims "It's alive!" literally refers to the scales of fish and the nails of parakeets, and metaphorically to the fact that the barber's activity – cutting hair – is not dead. The use of this specific figure of speech is highly significant: as Moura [2010: 178], explains, syllepses are "des signaux ou instruments fréquents de l'humour, parce qu'elles favorisent la prolifération des inférences interprétatives et l'ambivalence des parcours de lecture" and further on he even defines humor as "un art de la syllepse généralisée" [2010: 183]. Because it is a figure that plays with the limit between signifier and signified, it is an act of narrative creation; and because it plays on unexpected semantic relations, it conveys humor.

- 28 Humor in this passage is also emphasized through the interventions of Fogginus, which combine the three characteristics of literary humor as described by Nilsen & Nilsen [2008: 245], namely surprise, succinctness and repetition. Indeed, most of the humor in this extract lies in the fact that Fogginus mishears or misunderstands the words uttered by the barber, which gives way to repetitions (sometimes emphasized by typography) and to word play in the form of antanaclassis. The narrator compares Fogginus to a spider, and the zoomorphism is complete when the word "scale" is used to describe his movements as he climbs the rock. The character of Fogginus is the vessel of comic relief in this novel, and by using humor to this end Ducornet draws on the American literary tradition of humor as comic relief, as explained by Blacher Cohen [1992: 1]. Comic relief is used in *The Fountains of Neptune* as well, and in that novel, it is both linked to creativity and lexical creation.

2.2. Word creation and word transformation

- 29 *The Fountains of Neptune* alternates between two stories: in the first, Nicolas, as an adult, tries to piece together his lost memories after awaking from a forty-year-long trauma-induced coma. In the second, the reader witnesses him as a child, trying to discover the secret of his past life, namely his parents' tragic death. He tries to convince his friend, the sailor Toujours-Là, to tell him what happened to them:

(9) "Tell me what you know!"

"I knows plenny, nenny, Né-ni, Ni-Ni... plenny of thingsh, yeth, shit! SHIT!"

he barked, pulling out a chair and nearly falling from his own with the effort.

"You shit here, Nicolath."

"Please...." [...]

"Ni-na, na-na..." he sang inanely under his breath and it seemed an

unforgivable blasphemy, no matter how terrible the truth [...].
 “Wash hap... hap to her faish?”
 “Rose, I guess, must have –”
 “Better not look into the faish of Lilish!”
 “She was called Lily?”
 “Odille.” [...] “like odi-oush.” I held my breath. “Like Ogresh!” He sat back triumphantly. [...]
 “Juz in the song. Ac-shually she din’ have a knife. Twash Thomas choked –”
 He began to hum: “Too dee, tee dee, tedeum. O Thomash, foolish Thomash, O tell me what you’ve done – Tee dee, too dee-ah! Confound it Nini. I can’t recall thing. ‘Cept the end goes sumpin –” He cleared his throat and spat: “An’ now they is no’ore. Jus three corpses... thee corpses on the shore!”
 From the far end of the rom a woman joined in boozily:
 “Three horses on the floor –”
 “Hey! Wun minute!” Toujours-Là cried. Before the end it goes: “They was waiting on the beash wish stish!”
 “Beash? Wish? Stish?”
 Stishks! Stikshs! They wa-as waiting on the beash, see! They killed Odille. And Thomash too!”
 “Who?”
 “Ev’rybody. Hiding they wash. On the beash. Behind the sea wall. With stishks!” I attempted to decipher this. (p. 98-99)

A sharp contrast is drawn in this excerpt between the diegetic tragedy of the death of Nicolas’s parents on the one hand, and the stylistic comedy conveyed by Toujours-Là’s drunken language on the other. The first is put to the fore mainly through words related to the lexical field of death and murder, “knife”, “choked”, “corpses”, “kill”. The second, which acts as comic relief, puts forward a number of literary tools, first and foremost the use of lexical creations that convey humor because they are meant to imitate Toujours-Là’s drunken language and his momentary difficulty to pronounce words, which makes him hard to understand as Nicolas acknowledges at the end of the passage.

- 30 These creations are actually deformations of pre-existing words: “sticks” becomes “stishks”, “beach” becomes “beash” and “sit” becomes “shit”. The change from “sticks” (which is rather easy to pronounce) to “stishks” represents the speaker’s difficulty to articulate by inserting the phoneme /ʃ/. The phoneme /tʃ/ in “beach” is reduced to /ʃ/, a simplification which erases the difficulty caused by the consonant cluster in the original pronunciation. Finally, the phoneme /s/ in “sit” becomes /ʃ/ and turns the word into “shit”, to mimic the drunken man’s difficulty to pronounce dentals. These are standard processes used to represent drunkenness in written language, as can be seen, for instance, in Anthea Bell’s translation of the *Astérix* series into British English. These transformations of words to create new ones are used to represent Toujours-Là’s inability to speak clearly, and their humorous effect is emphasized when associated with his songs and his uncontrolled movements that verge on slapstick comedy. It is even more the case when the narrator comments on his clumsiness and ironically qualifies his attitude using the adverb “triumphantly”. Toujours-Là can barely speak and move, and the dashes both delay the revelation of the “terrible [...] truth” and symbolize the fact that Toujours-Là literally can’t find his words; *praeteritio* is indeed one of the figures of speech that conveys humor, as Moura argues [2010: 174].
- 31 Other processes that have been studied before participate in building humor in this extract, like paronomasia, of which there are many examples; among them: “three

corpses on the shore!” [...] “Three horses on the floor!” The way the narration uses creativity and builds this occurrence of paronomasia to provide comic relief is striking. The first sentence semantically refers to a tragic event, and when the following is pronounced it echoes the sounds of the first and twists the tragic effect into a humorous one, with a totally out-of-context sentence.

- 32 The narrative voice creates a drunken language which acts as a comic relief to Nicolas’s discovery of his tragic past. Humor is built thanks to lexical creation in order to cope for the tragedy of the diegesis. Tragedy and comedy are inextricably linked in Ducornet’s novels, and this association sometimes goes as far as giving some passages an overt theatrical dimension.

2.3. Double-entendre and puns: the ambiguity of language

- 33 Paradoxically, Nicolas’s adoptive mother is the most comic character in *The Fountains of Neptune*, and yet her name is simply “Rose”. The following passage, where Nicolas wonders about some rumor she told him about, shows why this character is one of the keystones of Ducornet’s humor and lexical creation in this novel:

(10) The chimp’s relations with the Cod’s wife are rumored “seditious” by Rose. I ask: “Why suspicious?”
 “He does her laundry, even sleeps in her bed and if that’s not Peruvius!”
 “But he sleeps in his cage! I’ve seen his little nest!”
 “I’m just repeating what the people say.”
 “After church!” Totor cries, losing patience. “The monkey’s innocent; his fingernails the proof he’s never touched soap. It’s Gilles-Gillesbis what keeps the Cod’s wife in tune.”
 “Gilles-Gillesbis and Aristide Marquis!”
 “Rose!”
 “I’m just rehashing what I’ve heard, Victor!”
 “And Totor? Does she take Totor on, too?”
 This is the first time I see them fight. I want to cry but I also feel like laughing. It is Rose who runs to the sink, sobbing, her apron thrown over her head. All this is the fault of the Evil, the Heavenly Ghost Port Bar!
 “And PETOMANIA!” Rose wails, hiccups, and wails again. It is true. Last week the chimp, wearing a fire helmet of red paper, had snuffed out a candleflame with a fart. “He could have set the place on fire!”
 Totor kisses Other Mother tenderly and dries her tears. He says: “Rosie, it was only a small wind. An oyster sneezing makes less wind.” Putting his arm around her he coaxes her back to her chair [...]. (p. 24-25)

Rose frequently uses the wrong words all along the novel. In this passage for example, she says “peruvius” instead of “suspicious”, and “rehashing” instead of “repeating”. This always creates instances of paronomasia in the novel, a figure Moura [2010: 174] lists as one that triggers humor.

- 34 Other occurrences of word play are “humor enhancers” in this excerpt. When Totor says “It’s Gilles-Gillesbis what keeps the Cod’s wife in tune”, it is an innuendo which plays on double-entendre, actually pointing at the assumed sexual relationship between the Cod’s wife and Gilles-Gillesbis. There could also be an allusion to Dizzy Gillespie, which once again creates humor by making a paronomastic pun on a name the reader knows.

- 35 Humour in this passage first comes from word play and puns, which are proof of the narrator's creativity since he invents new signifier / signified relations (creativity is inherent to word play as argued by Nilsen & Nilsen [2000: 181]). But humor is also triggered by tropes that underlie the text, such as its emphatic tone. The accumulation of exclamation marks and the typography which represents graphically (with the use of italics and capital letters) specific word stress participate in giving this passage an almost lyrical tone, along with Rose's grotesque behavior that verges on the burlesque with her exaggerated actions and reactions. This lyricism contrasts with the ridicule of the situations that are described, namely the assumed affair of the Cod's wife with a chimp, and the fact that the latter "snuffed out a candleflame with a fart." The emphatic tone of this extract lies in Rose's disproportionate, hyperbolic reactions.
- 36 Because of Rose's emphatic speech and attitude, the whole scene reads like drama, more precisely like slapstick comedy: the paratactic dialogues, the exaggerated actions and the sexual puns all participate in that representation. There is even an audience, represented by Nicolas, who watches the scene and "feel[s] like laughing" when he sees the ridiculous situation unfolding under his gaze.
- 37 The passage thus uses both microstructural and macrostructural tools to convey humor thanks to the narrator's creativity, something very specific to literary humor as explained by Nilsen & Nilsen [2008: 245]:
- In addition to using such surface structure techniques as puns and word play, authors of fuller pieces make use of such deep structure tropes as metaphors, similes, irony, and synecdoche. They have the space to develop truly humorous characters and to establish and then break patterns.
- 38 Literary texts are thus a privileged space to convey humor through creativity, as shown by this specific passage from *The Fountains of Neptune*, which uses theatricality to play on the characters' actions and on the narrator's lexical inventions to convey humor.
- 39 The study of *The Fountains of Neptune* and *Phosphor in Dreamland* has shown what literary and linguistic tools the narrative voice uses to convey humor as a comic relief to cope for tragic diegetic situations. In these cases, humor is "anything that makes [people] laugh in enjoyment because of being surprised by something absurd, ludicrous, or exaggerated", as explained by Nilsen & Nilsen [2008: 248]. It is a device designed, created by the narrator for the sole purpose of triggering the reader's kindly enjoyment. But in other novels, Ducornet displays another sort of humor, which has other purposes.

3. Humor and humanity

Dis-moi de qui tu ris, je te dirai qui tu es.

Paul Scudo, *Philosophie du rire*

- 40 In her first novel, *The Stain*, Ducornet uses humor not only to provoke the reader's laughter, but also to say something about society and the institutions, more specifically about how individuals perceive them and evolve within their vices and hypocrisy. Studying first the desacralization of religion, then the carnivalesque and lastly the deceptive language of adults will help further understand the link between lexical creation, creativity and humor in Ducornet's work, and in fiction as a whole.

3.1. Lexical creativity to desacralize religion

- 41 Turning the Church and religion into ridicule is first of all achieved through the humorous descriptions of the characters who are supposed to represent the Church, and of their speech and lexical creations. An example of this phenomenon appears in Père Poupine's first "religious" speech:

(11) Poupine diverted his pals with the following banter:
 "Compeers (an' the Brigadier hisself will vouchsafe for my verarse-ity, when Edma got into her head she must see my bare bum an' upon seein' it were moved to throw her petticoats un-arse-isted over her calamitous Arse-yrrian phiz (sacré cent-mille de bon Dieu!) I swear to God that I did see (an' unwillin'ly I arse-ures you!) her nest which (as she said herself an' as we'd all arse-umed) was empty. And (may God strike me down as I stand if I lie) I did also see, sure as I see you, that (by its arse-uredly grim arse-pect) this was a nest from which there had never been nothing to steal..." (p. 33)

This man of God is represented as everything but godly, first because of his blasphemies and the content of his "religious" speech that is turned to a "banter", and second because this very content is reflected in the words he uses, where all the occurrences of the morpheme "ass" have been turned to "arse". The priest moreover uses double-entendre in which the image of the nest refers to Edma's genitals. The narrator, through these multiple lexical creations, insists both on the priest's mispronunciation and on his obsession for sexuality, which makes him a vicious religious preacher unable to pass on the word of God.

- 42 The other main representative of the Church in *The Stain* is the Exorcist. This character first appears at the beginning of the novel when Edma seeks his help in naming Charlotte, who was just born. After intense thinking, the Exorcist answers:

(12) "We should name her Teccuciztecatl..."
 "You are mad!" Edma grabs the baby, who begins to wail.
 "I said we should name her Teccuciztecatl... However, we cannot. This is evident, even to me." (p. 21)

The ridiculous name he has chosen for Charlotte is not a lexical creation *per se*, as it is the name of an Aztec divinity. It is, however, an instance of creativity – or rather, an attempt at creativity – since the Exorcist obviously chose for Charlotte a name which is not meant to be given to children, which points to a distant and contradictory referent. But his creativity fails, as Edma realizes. She is the one who chooses Charlotte's name in the end, negating the Exorcist's creativity and his ability to choose a name – which was supposed to be one of the functions of priests during baptism. In other words, the narration here directly points at the inaccuracy and the impropriety of religious language through the Exorcist's attempt at lexical creation.

- 43 The Exorcist even fails his mission and purpose to chase demons because of his misuse of language and strange lexical associations:

(13) And if the Exorcist was said to be an old hand at confronting demons, he shied from contact with Sister Malicia who, as the seconds passed, looked more and more like an enraged lobster. Rather than push her away, he ran around and around his circle with his arms outstretched, calling: "O Astarôt! Obey promptly! By the Power of the Clavicle! Do not tarry! Come affably!" and so on. (p. 138)

This passage reminds of Rose's burlesque attitude in *The Fountains of Neptune*, because of the Exorcist's exaggerated movements and nonsensical words. The collocations he uses to chase the "demon" are surprising and preposterous. The narrator obviously mocks his lexical creations with the final "and so on", which implies that the Exorcist's words are not worth quoting entirely, thus mocking the very institution he represents, the Church. Combined with the ironic tone of the paragraph, it creates a humorous effect due to irony's "obvious connections to humor" as explained by Attardo [2017: 1] and Moura [2010: 114-116].

- 44 Humor is here again linked to lexical creation and to creativity, and in this specific novel it results in the desacralization of the Church, which is, according to Moura [2010: 165] one of the characteristics of the comic text, that can then verge on the burlesque and on Rabelaisian grotesque.

3.2. Humor and intensifying devices: the carnivalesque

- 45 In chapter 17 of *The Stain*, Charlotte's aunt, Edma, invites the Exorcist and the Mother Superior for lunch, a highly official occasion for her to show she is a good Christian. As the scene begins, the presence of wordplay and the importance of the choice of words is made obvious through the dialogue between the Exorcist and the Mother Superior:

(14) "The bread! So it swells in broth! As, Madame, my heart swells in the contemplation of this beautiful soup. Indeed as does my soul, wallowing (so to speak) in such felicitous odoriferosity!" [...] The Mother Superior herself warmed by the soup, the talk, the promise of roast duckling that lay heavily upon the air, bravely offered her own witticism:
 "Ignitum eloquium tuum vehementer; Your verb is consuming fire!"
 St Gemmes and her own torpid chambers seemed very far away indeed.
 "Continue!" She pleaded. "So rarely in my stern universe of prayer and penance am I audience to such eloquent, uh, verbosity!" (p. 75-76)

With the multiple references to the art of speaking, the reader knows full well that the dialogue will offer a reflexive – and humorous – comment on language. The discrepancy between the triteness of the subjects that are spoken about – for example, the soup – and the ornate speech the Exorcist and the Mother Superior are trying to achieve offers a contrast which makes this passage and the characters ridiculous. This is highlighted by the narrator, who tells how the Mother Superior "offered her own witticism": this remark is ironical, as two elements show she actually has none. First of all, she hesitates, as suggested by the interjection "uh", which shows she is not such a skilled speaker. Then, she chooses the word "verbosity" to qualify the Exorcist's speech, apparently without knowing it is actually quite pejorative. The unusual and unexpected collocations, such as "felicitous odoriferosity", also convey humor through creativity to this passage.

- 46 The scene turns to grotesque debauchery with the Exorcist's multiple sexual innuendoes directed at the Mother Superior, of which Edma is unaware:

(15) "The child has the Devil in her!"
 "As do we all, madame..." The Exorcist gazed deeply into the Mother Superior's pale eyes
 "[...] Temptation is everywhere, the fires of carnal lust glow in every alley..."
 "Ridiculous!" Edma snapped. "She is only ten years old!" (p. 77)

Edma thinks that the Exorcist is speaking about Charlotte, when he is actually speaking about his own – and the Mother Superior's – "lust". With this occurrence of double-entendre, the narrator plays on the different meaning words can acquire depending on the context. The scene turns to grotesque debauchery when the Exorcist's sexual innuendoes start explicitly describing the Mother Superior, as in this passage, where he is supposedly describing the bottle of wine:

(16) "She's a dusky wench, [...] her bones large and supple. She's plump and she's ready, she rolls over and asks only that we drink her. Perhaps she spreads her thighs too quickly, but then again, I am not a man to go to battle for a castle!"

The Mother Superior giggled, and hid her face with her veil.

"I see," he said to her, "that you are a woman of spirit." At this *bon mot* she laughed out loud. (p. 76)

Here again, the narration plays on words using double-entendre, and reflexively comments on its own creativity with the French compound "*bon mot*". After this, the characters' actions start matching their words:

(17) Taking aim, he thrust his big toe deep into the Mother Superior's well-oiled clockworks.

"Ah!" she cried.

"What's the matter?" asked Edma. "Choke on a bone?"

"I fear I've, uh, lost my ring!"

"I will look for your ring, my lady of the veils," said the Exorcist, "I'm sure to find it; it cannot be far."

"You've only just lost it?" asked Edma.

"Oh! No!" she sighed, visibly flummoxed. "I lost it before I came!" And she held his foot fast with her thighs.

"She lost it in the garden," said the Exorcist. "She lost it in the parsley." At this the Mother Superior giggled most suggestively.

"She lost it in Bluebeard's closet!" he added, giving a thrust; and once again she hid her face.

"Christ bid us drink his blood," said the Exorcist, raising his glass. "Drink, Ma Soeur. Is it not sweet?"

"Indeed it is sweet!" she breathed, slipping down in her chair. "Sweet! Sweet!"

[...] The Mother Superior frankly guffawed, a bawdy outburst her veil could not mask. Merrily she giggled, her breasts heaving beneath her wimple, her dimpled chin aglow with grease. (p. 78-79)

The accumulation of wine and food, the allusions to sex and the visible inversion that desacralizes the sanctity of men and women of God all remind of the carnivalesque defined by Bakhtin [1993], as argued by Rouayrenc [2012: 7-13]. The grotesque body of the Mother Superior loses its individuality, as underlined by the multiple moments when she veils her face: she becomes only a body, one that opens itself more and more as she laughs louder and louder, and her spirit fades as she becomes more corporeal. The grotesque body is characteristic of the carnivalesque, and as Moura [2010: 186-226] explains it is a very efficient vehicle of humor. The carnivalesque and the grotesque rely on a literary tradition that has associated the body and sexuality to laughter for centuries⁷. The narration thus relies on this genre to convey humor, one that also relies on the creativity associated to the numerous wordplays, in order to shed light on the vices and hypocrisy of the Church.

3.3. The comic effects of lexical creativity and ambiguous meaning

- 47 In *The Stain*, the hypocrisy of religion and the Church is highlighted, as well as that of adults as a whole. Little Charlotte indeed very often wonders at the meaning of what adults say, as can be seen with the extended metaphor of the hazelnut that starts as the narration describes a wedding the girl and her aunt Edma went to:

(18) Once they witnessed a wedding. The bride's coiffe was black because, as Edma explained, her hazelnut was smashed. The meaning of this was obscure.

"Her hazelnut, Aunt?"

"She is spoiled! Soiled!"

Charlotte looked the bride over. Her dress and apron, her belt and ribbons, even her shoes, were impeccably clean. She must be soiled within, Charlotte decided. Perhaps the bride had eaten filthy food for lunch? (p. 40)

This passage relies on several oppositions and discrepancies: first, between the literal and the figurative meanings of the "smashed hazelnut", since Edma uses this metaphor to refer to the fact that the bride was not a virgin when she married. This is not a common image, but one created by the narration: the reader can infer its meaning only because of the bride's black *coiffe* in the co-text. Charlotte herself doesn't understand this figurative meaning at all, she understands Edma's sentence literally at first, which explains why she asks her aunt for a clarification of the word "hazelnut". As a consequence, there is here a contrast between what Edma says and what Charlotte understands, which goes on afterwards as Charlotte reflects on the meaning of Edma's exclamation: "She is spoiled! Soiled!" Here again, she understands Edma's words literally and wonders at the assumed dirtiness of the bride, when she looks clean. The last paragraph underlines Charlotte's innocence and naivety as she concludes "Perhaps the bride had eaten filthy food for lunch?"; the sexual figurative meaning of the whole scene totally escapes her. This offers a third contrast, this time between Charlotte and Edma, as the latter – who is supposedly a devout Christian – understands the sin of luxury full well and doesn't dare use the right words to describe it. The metaphor of the hazelnut is a creation of the narrator which conveys humor to the text, one of the characteristics of this figure of speech according to Moura [2010: 174], because it plays on the duplicity of words. In this passage, humor is also conveyed through the character of Edma, and more specifically the way she uses circumlocution – and here, paronomasia – to avoid speaking about sex.

- 48 Sometime after this event, the diegesis again takes the two characters to a wedding, and Charlotte observes the bride's shoes: "Charlotte saw her wooden wedding shoes, carved with hazelnuts and leaves. The hazelnut meant something, but what?" (p. 44) The metaphor of the hazelnut, introduced a few pages before, is used again here and its meaning is still "obscure", as highlighted by the emphasis on the verb "meant" thanks to the italics. Adults express themselves in a language unknown to Charlotte, as can be seen after the wedding night:

(19) [B]ecause of the wolf-fear, no one dared to go home. [...] At dawn [Charlotte] awoke to see the nuptial sheet, stained with dark, brown blood, carried in triumphantly by La Rouge. At once Charlotte imagined that the wolf, disguised as Red Riding Hood, had entered into the bride's window and had climbed into bed with her.

“Has she been eaten? Has she been eaten?” Charlotte ran to Edma [...].
 “Who? What nonsense is she talking now! How she tries my temper!” (p. 47)

Charlotte doesn't understand the meaning of the ritual exposition of the bloodstained sheet after the wedding night, supposed to prove the bride was a virgin before her sexual encounter with her husband. She tries to construct meaning thanks to the context and her own knowledge: she knows that a wolf lurks in the village, and she knows the *Little Red Riding Hood* tale; as a consequence, she believes that the lurking wolf came in and ate the bride. Edma, once again, doesn't explain the meaning of the bloodstained sheet because it is related to sex, and so to sin. Even if Charlotte's deductions are logical, Edma deems them nonsensical. This character's anger and impatience at Charlotte's questions about the meaning of the language of adults, when the latter use images to speak about sex, are recurrent all along the novel. It creates humorous situations, where Edma gets angry because she is uncomfortable. Her embarrassment comes first from the fact that she does not want to speak about sex, and second from the fact that Charlotte's questions reveal the girl's innocence and, by contrast, Edma's sinfulness for being aware of lust. These situations always rely on the creation of images, of figurative and circumlocutory meanings for pre-existing signs.

- 49 The use of creativity and humor to reveal the hypocritical language of adults as compared to that of children is recurrent in *The Stain*, but also in other novels by Ducornet; only children's language seems to be able to bridge the gap between signifier and signified. As a result, children's language in her novels is a tool that helps highlight the discrepancy between words and their meaning in the language of adults, which gives rise to humorous situations that rely on creativity and lexical creation.

Conclusion

- 50 Linguistic manipulations such as portmanteau words, paronomasia, puns and lexical inventions generate humor in Ducornet's novels by participating in the characterization of funny and caricatural characters through onomastics and synecdoche, among others. But the author also uses a web of intertextual references and reinvents them, either by slightly changing the words themselves or by using them in a new context. She borrows from literary genres such as nonsense or the carnivalesque and reinvents them, in a new way which triggers humor through literary creativity and lexical creation, either to create comic relief or to desacralize the Church in the examples studied; in either case, comedy is used to provide a new point of view on something (a situation, an institution, a literary genre) which already exists. Her creativity is, along with her lexical creations, a tool which triggers humor in her fiction, but also pushes the reader to pay attention to the construction of words themselves, their spelling, their sounds and their meaning – Ducornet's lexical creation metatextually questions literary creation itself.
- 51 Her mastery of words and of linguistic and literary tools enables her to be creative and to (re)create a specific language for her original fictions, which also enables her readers to laugh at her characters, as if humor could indeed “[relieve] men from their own imperfections”, as argued by Grojnowski [1991: 6].

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NOTES

1. See the synthetic table presented by Moura [2010: 12], which lists the different meanings of the word depending on the language.
2. See Moura [2010: 2] for a panorama of the literary research on humor, Royot [1980], who focuses more specifically on American literary humor, Zimmerman [2003] for a presentation of humor-related literary theory and Attardo [2008: 101-104] for a panorama of humor research, the last part focusing on linguistics.
3. See Attardo [2008: 102-103] for a definition and a study of the characteristics of puns. See also chapter 1 in Henry [2003] for a typology of wordplay.
4. Intended puns on proper nouns draw on a long-running literary tradition that goes back to Homer's *Odyssey* and the Scriptures, as reminded by Ballard [1998: 2; 2001: 175].
5. See Trolé [2020: 56-74] for an in-depth study of intertextuality and cultural references in Ducornet's novels.
6. A name also used by surrealist painter Max Ernst, which points both at Ducornet's link with this movement and at her use of intertextuality in her novels.

7. See Valette [2012] for a study of the link between the body and laughter in medieval aesthetics, Ménager [2012] for more information on the grotesque and Roche [2012] for a study of the link between sexuality and laughter.

ABSTRACTS

This article questions the link between creativity, lexical creation and humor in literary texts, more specifically in three of Rikki Ducornet's novels: *The Stain*, *The Fountains of Neptune* and *Phosphor in Dreamland*. The literary text is a privileged space for linguistic experimentation and particularly for literary creation, which takes the form of tropes and figures of speech which question the relation between sign and meaning. Rikki Ducornet's novels use both lexical creation and literary creativity to create humor, as they rely on long-lasting literary traditions such as Lewis Carroll's nonsense and Rabelais' carnivalesque. Her novels show the powerful link between lexical creation, fictional creativity and humor; this article will study the modalities and the consequences of this link.

Cet article interroge le lien entre créativité, création lexicale et humour dans les textes littéraires, plus particulièrement dans trois romans de l'écrivaine américaine Rikki Ducornet : *The Stain*, *The Fountains of Neptune* et *Phosphor in Dreamland*. Le texte littéraire est un espace privilégié de l'expérimentation linguistique et en particulier de la création lexicale, mais aussi de la créativité littéraire qui émerge sous la forme de tropes et de figures qui interrogent la relation entre le signifiant et le signifié. Les romans de Rikki Ducornet comptent à la fois sur la création lexicale et sur la créativité littéraire pour véhiculer l'humour, puisant dans une longue tradition littéraire et notamment le nonsense hérité de Lewis Carroll et le carnivalesque de Rabelais. Ses romans mettent en avant le lien puissant entre la création lexicale, la créativité fictionnelle et l'humour ; cet article propose d'étudier les modalités et les conséquences de ce lien.

INDEX

Keywords: onomastics, lexical creation, puns, nonsense, carnivalesque, comic relief

Mots-clés: onomastique, création lexicale, jeux de mots, nonsense, carnivalesque, comic relief

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