



City Research Online

City St George's, University of London

Citation: Mera, M. (2023). The Audiovisual Architecture of Musical Pauses, Punchlines, and Jablines: Paddington's Punctuation. In: Audissino, E. & Wennekes, E. (Eds.), The Palgrave Handbook of Music in Comedy Cinema. . Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 9783031334214 doi: 10.1007/978-3-031-33422-1_5

This is the accepted version of the paper.

This version of the publication may differ from the final published version. To cite this item please consult the publisher's version.

Permanent repository link: <https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/30838/>

Link to published version: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-33422-1_5

Copyright and Reuse: Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the author(s) and/or copyright holders. Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, unless otherwise indicated, provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way. For full details of reuse please refer to [City Research Online policy](#).

The Audiovisual Architecture of Musical Pauses, Punchlines, and Jablines:

Paddington's Punctuation

Miguel Mera

City, University of London

miguel.mera.1@city.ac.uk

Introduction

In his groundbreaking work on classical Hollywood animated shorts, *Tunes for 'Toons* (2005), Daniel Goldmark identified a surprising feature in the work of the influential composer, Scott Bradley. This related, specifically, to Bradley's attitude to what has become known as *mickey-mousing*, a process of closely synchronising visual gestures and actions with musical patterns, phrases, and rhythms. Audiences are quite used to the physical aspects of characters in classic cartoons being made hyper-explicit by the dynamic score. The animated characters are brought to life by the synchronous energy-giving music and there is a precise dovetailing of music and action. Or is there?

According to Goldmark, Scott Bradley's mickey-mousing is not quite as synchronous as we tend to think. He argued that, 'Bradley usually *anticipated* an impact or reaction by at least a second or two, so that the audience would *hear* the action before

seeing it' (2005, p. 64). The purpose of this, he suggested, is to give some insight into the character's interior state at a moment of crisis. Using the Tom & Jerry animation, *Solid Serenade* (1946), Goldmark highlighted, for example, a trombone glissando that matches Jerry's physical action of sliding on a windowsill and is heard a moment before Jerry reacts to Tom, who we understand is giving chase off-screen. We then hear a series of fast, syncopated chords *before* Jerry runs off and Tom chases him. Goldmark argued that this approach to mickey-mousing created 'an expectation that the visual action would fulfill' (2005, p. 64). In swiftly-paced chase sequences the music prepares the audioviewer for slapstick comedy before it occurs '...we can see that each important hit or impact, whether a footfall or an anvil falling, comes directly *after*, or in the midst of some musical gesture' (2005, p. 64).

Goldmark's observations raise some interesting and challenging questions. If musical mickey-mousing is not always precisely synchronous with visual gesture, how important is audiovisual synchronicity in the creation of humour? Do we, in fact, enjoy a series of "non-synchronous" punctuations as long as they lead to a punchline that is delivered with perfect precision? What kinds of interactions between visual and aural materials generate humour, and what roles do frequency and timing play in this?

In screen music and sound studies the term mickey-mousing has been used pejoratively to refer to a heavy-handed and outdated mode of scoring. However, if the secret to comedy is timing, as the adage goes, then aspects of audiovisual synchronisation are surely fundamental to its success. We currently lack methodologies to define or describe the nature of these kinds of interactions. The term mickey-mousing does not cover anything like the range of possibilities, which might extend from a closely synchronised musical gesture to phrases that structurally demarcate different types of narrative flow. The important factor in Scott Bradley's work, of course, is that

there is an ecosystem of micro gestures and macro structuring at play which is the fundamental bed for humour. There is both gestural punctuation and flow.

In this chapter I will highlight aspects of audiovisual synchronisation that move beyond a basic understanding of mickey-mousing, in order to draw attention to the ways in which the audiovisual ecosystem of rhythm, gesture, punctuation, phrasing, and flow impact on comedic effectiveness. I will compare the official trailer for *Paddington* with a corresponding scene from the film itself (2014, dir. Paul King, music by Nick Urata). The trailer features ‘Zorba’s Dance’ from *Zorba the Greek* (1964, dir. Michael Cacoyannis, music by Mikis Theodorakis) while the film features a score that mimics many of the temporal characteristics of this trailer music. Using a graphical punctuation schematic, I will show how audiovisual rhythm and, especially, musically phrased punctuation reveals differing comedic functions and shapes the comic effectiveness of these two sequences. This comparison allows for productive consideration of Victor Raskin and Salvatore Attardo’s concept of the jabline (Raskin & Attardo 1991: Attardo 1996; 2001).

Jablines are linguistic scripts involved in the set-up of a joke before the punchline, contributing to the escalating creation of humour within linear narrative structures. Drawing from this linguistic theory, I show how musical punctuation both supports and challenges the jablines/punchline concept. While the connections between language and music are never direct, my thought experiment allows useful correspondences to be drawn which reframe our structural understanding of mickey-mousing. This chapter will ultimately show how two similar sequences use punctuation in very different ways to generate audiovisual humour, revealing an open-ended approach as a central feature of the promotional-discourse structure of the trailer versus

a cinematic-narrative structure that uses less punctuation, a longer build up, and a clearer concluding 'punchline.'

Paddington's Journey

Paddington Bear first appeared in the 1958 children's book *A Bear Called Paddington* written by Michael Bond and illustrated by Peggy Fortnum. Having travelled from darkest Peru as a stowaway, he is adopted by the prototypical middle-class Brown family and given an English name, after Paddington Station where he was found (his original Peruvian name being too difficult for the family to pronounce). He is a friendly, anthropomorphised, talking bear and is exceptionally polite and kind, but his innocence and inexperience get him into constant trouble despite the fact that he is always trying to do the right thing. He wears a distinctive blue duffel coat, an old hat, and loves marmalade sandwiches. Paddington is an enduring and popular character within British culture, but he also challenges particular histories, identities, and attitudes because he is, of course, an illegal immigrant. Angela Smith (2006) notes that the series of books are subtle in their articulation of racist and xenophobic discourses highlighting issues of Otherness, but she also argues that they show how the dominant culture retains its superior status. Peter Hunt and Karen Sands's altogether darker reading suggests that the stories are, in fact, typical of post-Empire children's books reinforcing positive images of Imperialism where the 'Brits are still on top' and where 'you might be forgiven for not noticing that the Empire has disappeared' (2000, p. 48). Somewhere in between these positions Kyle Grayson argues that the Paddington stories exemplify the tensions caused by the presence of the foreigner and problematise ways in which the foreign subject in the UK is positioned within ambivalent liberalism as

both a cause of and a solution to politico-cultural problems. For Grayson, the Paddington stories attempt to ‘negotiate the bordering practices of a dominant culture and unfamiliar moral economy’ (2013, p. 379) and reproduce the boundaries within which ‘understandings of what it means to be a good host and a good foreigner in a liberal society are contested’ (2013, p. 391). Indeed, Paddington’s unfamiliarity with English customs and civility is what normally results in the situational humour. In this sense, the Paddington narrative typically exemplifies the ‘fish out of water’ story structure.

Paddington has had a number of screen incarnations. The BBC television series *Paddington* (1976) and *The Adventures of Paddington* (1979–1980) were scripted by Michael Bond himself and narrated by Michael Hordern, who voiced all the characters. Animated by Ivor Wood, this adaptation had a very distinctive mixed-media style that emphasised difference with Paddington appearing as a stop-motion colour puppet in front of two-dimensional backgrounds that were primarily black-and-white and lacked detail. All the other characters were two-dimensional drawings. In one sense this was faithful to the static images of the original books but also gave Paddington more agency. The musical score by Herbert Chappell was used to bookend the animation appearing only in the beginning and end credits. In terms of synchronicity of music and action, therefore, Paddington had not yet reached a point where mickey-mousing or direct musical punctuation was used as a comic device.

Paddington Bear (1989–1990) on the other hand was co-produced by American company Hanna-Barbera and the UK’s Central Independent Television. It was a traditional two-dimensional drawn animation and contained music throughout each episode. The music appeared in light-hearted short sections with quick changes of mood and strong melodic content. The score composed by Tom Worrall sits within the Hanna-

Barbera house style from its prime-time heyday in the 1960s and aped *The Flintstones* (1960–66) and *Scooby-Doo, Where Are You?* (1969). The different musical phrases provided moments of punctuation when moving from one musical idea to the next. These represented general changes in mood and character, but did not engage in detailed gestural mickey-mousing. In line with other Hanna-Barbera shows, Paddington even had his own theme song, in this case in a boogie-woogie big band style. Paddington's introduction to the American audience was, according to animator and producer, Iwao Takamoto, part of a strategy to rapidly develop content featuring recycled characters following the sale of Hanna-Barbera to Great American Broadcasting in 1987 (Takamoto 2009, pp. 167–67). As way of supporting the cultural cross-over, an American boy was added to the stories as the cousin of the two children in the Brown family.

The third TV series, *The Adventures of Paddington Bear* (1997) comprised traditional two-dimensional colour animation and first aired in the USA before it made its way to British airwaves shortly after. The music in this series is much more stylistically diverse reinforcing particular locations or moods and is used primarily to establish scenes. Songs also occasionally intersperse the action. The music enters and exits in short bursts and is more intermittent compared to the previous version. Paddington also narrates for the first time via interior monologue. In each of these incarnations of Paddington, then, there is differing and relatively limited use of music to represent his gestural actions.

By the time we get to 2014, however, the full opportunities afforded by contemporary technology are embraced as a photorealistic computer-animated Paddington interacts in a live-action environment. Charles Howell, the head of production at visual effects company Framestore noted the challenge of bringing

Paddington to life: ‘He had to be a realistic, living, breathing furry bear, not just a cartoon character’ (in Caranicas 2015). The 2014 film, therefore, marks a journey for Paddington in terms of credible anthropomorphic representation. Paddington comes ‘alive’ for the first time in a world of magic realism. This presents some interesting perspectives for the score, which the composer Nick Urata understood in terms of foregrounded expressive potential, noting that in traditional comedies you have to ‘sort of stay out of the way’ (in Pape 2015), but in *Paddington* the ‘music was almost allowed to speak louder and be somewhat cartoonish and funny, so it allowed for a bit of musical exaggeration...’ (in Pape 2015). Urata articulates the tensions that arise from the magic realist approach which is ‘somewhat cartoonish’, there is more room for a gesturally expressive and expansive score, but within limits that do not reach the full extent of detailed classic animated mickey-mousing. This has implications for our understanding of the particular sequences that we will explore shortly.

The film also marks a clear shift in cultural attitude demonstrating extended engagement with the melting pot of multicultural London. For example, throughout the film a 5-piece calypso band, D-Lime featuring Tobago Crusoe, perform songs on the streets of the City. This includes a version of ‘London is the Place for Me’, which was written by Lord Kitchener (Aldwyn Roberts), a Trinidadian musician who was one of the passengers on the Empire Windrush, the ship that brought hundreds of Caribbean immigrants to the UK in the late 1940s. This apparent open engagement is not without complication. Philip Smith has noted that this film version of Paddington does not draw sympathy *because* he is a migrant, but because he presents no threat to cultural customs. Paddington is an immigrant ‘whose manners and outlook express, and upon whom audiences can project, qualities of Englishness. His foreignness does not manifest as discrete practices and expectations that must be negotiated within the dominant culture,

but simply as a lack of knowledge' (Smith 2020, p. 27). Paddington's journey towards the 2014 film, therefore, is twofold, traversing British conceptualisations of the Other in the context of immigration, and also in terms of a fictional animated character fulfilling anthropomorphised cinematic magic-realism.

A Bear Walks Into a Bar

There has been a significant amount of research on verbal comedy relating to the structure of joke telling, which provides a helpful framework for considering humorous audiovisual interactions. Of particular note is the work by Victor Raskin and Salvatore Attardo, which highlights central semantic characteristics of comedic incongruity and its resolution, as well as providing a useful conceptual link between music and linguistics (Raskin 1985; 2008; Raskin & Attardo 1991; Attardo 1994; 1996; 1997; 1998; 2001). Raskin's Semantic-Script Theory of Humor (SSTH) emerged in his book *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor* (1985) and was the first formal linguistic treatment of verbal humour that identified the conditions required for a text to be funny. Raskin put forward the pithy idea that humour arises from an incongruous opposition between overlapping 'scripts' (1985, p. 104). A script, in this context, is a complex of semantic information that surrounds a term and the concepts it evokes, a word and its web of associations. It could be an object (real or imaginary), an event, an action, a quality, and so on. It is a cognitive structure internalised by the speaker and it represents their knowledge of a small part of the world (1985, p. 81).

At this point it may be useful to tell a short joke:

A bear walks into a bar and says: 'I'd like a pint of lager, please.'

‘Sure,’ says the barman, ‘but why the big paws?’

This joke plays dexterously with Raskin's notion of the script overlap or script opposition. Here an action in the telling of the joke, a *pause*, helps set up an incongruity that triggers the search for an alternative meaning that ‘makes sense’ of the incongruity: the bear’s big *paws*. The joke is admittedly funnier when delivered in person with arms raised to mimic the bear’s outstretched paws on the phrase ‘I’d like...’, but the important point is that the joke uses a sophisticated performative mode of script opposition. The main assertion of the Semantic-Script-Theory of Humour was that the text of a joke is always compatible with two distinct scripts that are opposed to each other. The delivery of the punchline ‘triggers the switch from one script to the other by making the hearer backtrack and realise that a different interpretation was possible from the very beginning’ (Raskin & Attardo 1991, p. 308). While the linguistic aspects are, of course, fundamental to the structure of the above joke, the act of pausing and the management of its timing is absolutely key to a successful humorous rendition. This is something that is missed in pure semantic analysis of humour. If the secret to comedy is timing, then we need to be able to account for both the structural conditions in which humour can arise and to determine the effective mechanisms for its delivery. This becomes immediately clear when we consider the kinetic relationship between sound, music, and moving image.

It has been noted that jokes often present several incongruous elements. The incongruity included in the punchline is typically called the focal incongruity and is usually resolved at the end of the joke, while the incongruities presented in the set up are called background incongruities and are not typically resolved at the end of the joke (Attardo et al. 2002). In drawing out this distinction, Raskin and Attardo identified two

kinds of funny lines in humorous texts: the punchline and the jabline (Raskin & Attardo 1991: Attardo 1996; 2001). Jablines are considered semantically identical to punchlines since they are also based on a script opposition, but jablines are not final, they are involved in the set up of a joke before the punchline. A narrative joke can consequently have many jablines. In narrative jokes, then, the punchline is not the only humorous element. Attardo's analysis showed how the jabline does not interrupt the flow of the text, neither can it cause a reinterpretation of the whole text, but it does contribute to the escalating creation of humour within narrative structures. A punchline is a disruptive element as it forces the receiver of the joke to reinterpret the text, but jablines are found everywhere else in the text besides the ending and are indispensable to the development of its plot, without causing a reconsideration of textual meaning (Attardo 2001, pp. 82–83).

In her exploration of the relationship between punchlines and jablines Villy Tsakona outlines how the script opposition of the punchline is always different from all the others that appear in the joke (2003). I include one of the jokes she analyses in full below, with jablines marked as **J** and the punchline marked as **P**:

At four o'clock in the morning, a hotel receptionist receives a phone call from a guy who sounds drunk and asks him at what time the bar opens. **J** 'The hotel bar opens at noon, sir,' replies the receptionist. An hour later, the receptionist receives another phone call from the same guy who sounds even more drunk. 'At what time does the bar open?' **J** 'As I told you, sir, the bar opens at noon,' answers the receptionist. After another hour, the guy calls again and sounds even more drunk than before. 'At what time did you say the bar opens?' **J** The receptionist replies,

‘The hotel bar opens at noon, but if you cannot wait, you can ask room service to bring you something to drink in your room.’ ‘No, I don’t want to get into the bar,’ says the man. ‘I want to get out of it.’ **P** (Tsakona 2003, p. 323)

In this narrative joke Tsakona explains how the script opposition of the punchline differs from those found in the preceding three jablines, which are based on the idea that the man is so desperate for alcohol that he pesters the receptionist. The punchline reveals that he actually wants to escape from the bar rather than get into it. Tsakona shows how the script opposition of the punchline is based on the information presented in the set up, but is not identical to the other script oppositions in the same text. We can also note the importance of repetition and structural placement in the escalation of the humour as it builds towards the punchline.

The jabline concept provides a useful analogy for consideration in audiovisual musical humour, but as I have already suggested the fundamental missing component is performative, the unfolding delivery of the joke in real time. In this sense, linguistic studies have only relatively recently extended structural concepts to include prosody, the rhythm, stress, and intonation of speech. Norrick (2001) analysed prosodic elements such as repetition, hesitation, exclamation and tempo manipulation in formulaic narrative jokes told in interaction. He concluded that several features such as hesitations, false starts, and repetitions were in fact important aspects of successful delivery that might otherwise be expected to detract from the telling. He also pointed, usefully, to the interaction between structure, syntactical features, and performance.

Ann Wennerstrom (2011) analysed six jokes and noted that speakers employed two contrasting intonation patterns to produce a humorous effect, indicating to the

listener the need to reanalyse the text and shift from one script to another. Intonation triggers the mental search for a cohesive tie that may not be obvious from the lexicogrammatical structure alone, drawing attention to particular elements of the information structure of the discourse. In a separate study Archakis et al. (2010) analysed whether jablines are marked off by prosodic features, in other words whether there is a kind of framing of jablines in the telling of a joke. Through qualitative and quantitative analysis they argued that pauses surrounding jab lines and differentiation in speech intensity, either independently or combined, were systematically used by the narrators in order to delimit and emphasise jablines.

Interestingly, these kinds of argument have been strongly refuted by Attardo et al. (2011) who found no evidence of significant prosodic difference in volume, pitch, speech rate, or pauses, between serious text and narrative conversational humour. There is ongoing talk-in-interaction research, therefore, that needs to resolve these issues and to determine whether there is a solid basis for prosodic framing of jablines or if these are simply ‘folk theories of humor’ (Gironzetti 2017, p. 402).

Music and audiovisual action are not, of course, the same as speech and need to operate with more clear signals, frames, and flows than language precisely because the semantic meaning is less direct. But the prosodic aspects identified above do point to the potential for structures of humorous phrasing, gesture, and punctuation, where rhythmic emphasis and repetition can amplify comedic intent. My hypothesis is that the creation of audiovisual humour frequently uses a variety of types of punctuation, including synchronous pauses, gestural synchronisation, phrase demarcations, or emphases that can be aligned with the semantic-script jablines concept as part of a continuous musical flow. With this in mind we now turn to the flow and punctuation of

two sequences, first the trailer and then a corresponding sequence from the film *Paddington* (2014).

Paddington's Punctuation

As I have been suggesting there is a significant difference between the appropriate conditions to generate humour and effective delivery of it. The sequences we will now explore both contain musical and audiovisual conditions that generate humour but do so in very different ways. The trailer uses extensive audiovisual punctuation, concurrent with the structural, rhythmic, and prosodic idea of jablines, to generate an escalating sense of comedy that ultimately remains open ended because it withholds delivery of a final 'punchline'. The film scene uses punctuation much less frequently over a longer timescale, but makes greater use of structural definition, tempo fluctuation, and ultimately delivers a classic script-opposition punchline more directly. The methods employed represent the differing functions of the humour in these sequences, relating to compressed time in the trailer and cinematic narrative structure in the film scene. In my identification of punctuation as a key feature of audiovisual humour, I argue that it is articulated primarily through structural pauses, rhythmic accentuation, and very close rhythmic congruence of musical and visual gestures that is marked at both the micro-gestural and macro-structural levels.

The first example is from the official trailer for the film *Paddington* (2014).¹ The promotional function of trailers means that they cannot leave the audience in any doubt about genre. They are also intended to thrive on narrative gaps in order to create desire for completion in the audience. In their study of music and sound in trailers, James Deaville and Agnes Malkinson argue that trailers intensify 'the experience of

temporalization through synchresis between sound and image' (2014, p. 124). Synchresis is Michel Chion's term for the forging between something one sees and something one hears and is 'the mental fusion between a sound and a visual when these occur at exactly the same time' (Chion 1994, p. 62). Deaville and Malkinson also suggest that comedy trailers contain specific aural characteristics that distinguish them from other trailer genres.

In comparison with trailers for films in other genres, more extended scenes ... are excerpted, presumably, from the film: this is the case because time is needed to prepare and execute jokes. Ironically one of the most notable sonic devices is the use of silence to highlight the 'punchline' (2014, p. 127).

This provides a good overarching description of what happens in the trailer for *Paddington*, with two extended sequences excerpted from the film, but I argue that there is not a singular musical punchline, rather there are numerous rapid points of punctuation that synchronously serve to highlight structural comedic moments. The time needed to prepare a joke and the common use of silence to highlight it, as suggested by Deaville and Malkinson, needs further exploration because there is a rich and complex structural relationship between these interrelated elements.

The trailer lasting 02:23 has a simple three-part structure comprising a very short establishing introduction (9.8%), followed by abridged versions of two key comedy sequences from the film. The first and largest is when Paddington inadvertently floods the Brown's bathroom (70.6%) and the second is when he travels for the first time on the London Underground (19.6%). Three pieces of pre-existing music are used

to demarcate the respective sections:

A. An orchestral piece of music entitled ‘Spirited’ composed by Matthew Janszen for the Sencit Trailer Sync Library as part of their *Tenth Dimension* series.² We see scenes of the forest in Peru, a ship on the ocean, the London skyline and a train arriving at Paddington station. The aim is to establish the journey to London and the intertitles emphasise this: ‘A young explorer. Must find his way. In a strange new land.’ The music acts as a coherent thread that helps ‘glue’ the short sequence together.

B. ‘Zorba’s Dance’ from the film *Zorba the Greek* (1964) is divided into three sections of increasing tempo and intensity (B¹, B² and B³), demarcated by two long pauses. We see an establishing shot of Windsor Gardens followed by Henry Brown on the telephone to his insurers intercut with Paddington in bathroom. The final scene shows Paddington riding the wave in the bath and travelling down the stairs to the Brown's kitchen.

C. L’Orchestra Cinematique’s cover version of ‘Pack up Your Troubles’. Paddington tries to negotiate the escalator in the London Underground system, he understands the sign ‘dogs must be carried’ literally and acquires a dog. He later gets his head trapped in an underground barrier.

Figure 1 represents the structure of the trailer as well as two primary modes of punctuation: 1) big pauses marked in grey, and 2) punctuation through very close

rhythmic congruence of musical and visual gestures, marked by numbers from 1 to 10 (with the relevant description below).

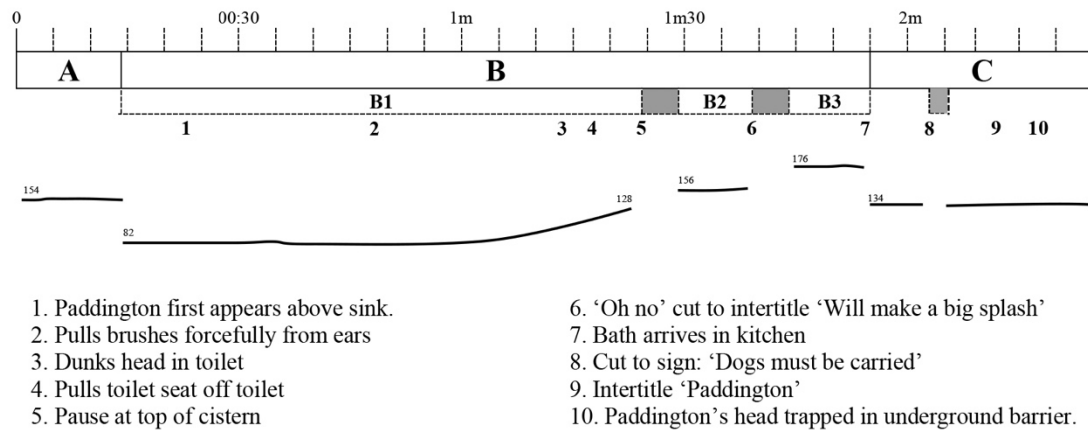


Figure 1. Punctuation Schematic - Paddington Trailer

Section A establishes the scene with light-hearted energetic music. It is marked by a complete lack of rhythmic or gestural punctuation as its aim is to present the narrative journey from Peru to London as quickly as possible.

Section B, however, uses Mikis Theodorakis's music 'Zorba's Dance' which was originally composed for the film *Zorba the Greek* (1964), and has very little obvious connection with contemporary London or bears from Peru. The music uses a simple repetitive harmonic structure and builds through escalating terraced layers until it is almost frenzied. This is achieved in a compressed timescale by dividing the music into three increasingly fast segments which are defined by pauses. In section B¹ the music starts slowly with a repetitive "oom pah" pattern, recurrent anacrusis upbeat, and limited instrumentation of solo bouzouki and solo guitar. The first punctuation point (1) coincides with the entrance of the bouzouki and the sudden appearance of Paddington. The rhythmic baton here is passed between spoken text, music, and visual

action as the scene cuts from Henry Brown speaking with his insurers to Paddington in the bathroom. This first punctuation point rhythmically emphasises a narrative script opposition after the phrase, ‘yes, a bear’.

Henry Brown (speaking on the phone): ‘Hello, I just need to add something to my home insurance policy. Well, what it is, is we have a guest for the night, a bear, and I just needed some extra cover for any dam... yes, a bear.’ *Enter bouzouki and sudden appearance of Paddington.*

The tempo of the music then moves from $\text{♩} = 82$ to $\text{♩} = 128$ in 2/4, with a rapid increase reserved for the very end of the section, which is also marked by a series of condensed punctuation points, indicated as (3), (4), and (5). The last punctuation point here (5) accentuates a strong downbeat and a long pause as we see Paddington directly looking to the camera at the top of the cistern just before he and it collapse into the bathroom (Fig. 2). Following this pause the texture of the music builds again in B^2 as does the tempo, which remains at a reasonably constant $\text{♩} = 156$. Henry Brown’s realisation, ‘Oh no!’ is again emphasised by another strong downbeat punctuation (6) and a pause on a cut to the intertitle: ‘Will make a big splash.’ After this final pause in section B^3 , the most fully orchestrated and rapid sequence is heard, featuring bouzouki, baglama, guitar, and bass. The tempo here is a constant and frenetic $\text{♩} = 176$ leading to a final punctuation point where the bath travels down the stairs and arrives in the Brown’s kitchen (7). There is a grand scale escalation of humour narratively and musically throughout the section with block structures highlighting several synchronous pauses and punctuations that identify important comedic moments.

Section C, in a constant 4/4, has strong downbeat punctuations on three occasions. The first (8) also has a long pause drawing attention to the visual sign: ‘dogs must be carried’. Then there are further synchronous punctuations of two strong visual gestures, the title card of the film itself (9) and finally a moment where Paddington’s head is trapped in a London underground entry barrier (10). The music seems to tread water as if its very purpose is to synchronously identify the punctuation points. The punctuation at (10) remains harmonically open on the supertonic and provides a significant moment of emphasis. There is tonic harmony following it at the very end of the trailer providing a sense of closure, but it is certainly not as emphatic as the gestural identification of the previous punctuation point.



Figure 2. Paddington’s Big Pause

The increasing proliferation and frequency of the punctuation points in sections B and C is clear. The repetition of the punctuations tied to larger aspects of musical structure generates a rhythmic escalation of the humour, and punctuations (5), (6), and (8) are further emphasised by big pauses. Yet, this escalation does not have a final ‘punchline’ in the form of a narrative joke. There are a series of rapid-fire emphases that are more like jablines, but no significant concluding musical-structural gesture that would present something equivalent to a script opposition. This seems to me an

invitational strategy, a process of attraction and persuasion, that advocates the comedic intent and intensity of the film to the prospective audience. The energy provided by the organisation of these punctuation points perhaps supports the commonly held view that all the best jokes are in the trailer not the film (Kernan 2004, p. 1) but it may be more accurate to suggest that the rhythmic frequency and intensity here is related to the strategies of narrative pleasure that are fundamental to the promotional discourse of trailers.

The film scene is longer than the trailer and sits within an overarching cinematic narrative structure that presents a different kind of musical humour, despite the fact that the score is clearly modelled on the same music from 'Zorba the Greek'. The composer, Nick Urata, emulates aspects of Theodorakis's musical construction especially the contained instrumentation and terraced rhythmic accretion. However, the musical forces and style shift dramatically throughout the scene from a quirky small instrumental group to large orchestral ensemble organised in clear blocks of varied musical material. In this sense, large scale structural change sculpts the narrative and comedic evolution of the film sequence as follows:

- A. Piano, guitar, and restricted use of percussion. Accompaniment passages with extensive use of arpeggiation and extreme rubato creating wildly fluctuating tempo. We see Paddington in the bathroom trying to work out how to use toothbrushes.
- B. Addition of the bass to the small instrumental group, now with a steady purposeful tempo, more active percussion, fuller movement, and an active piano melody. Paddington gets his head stuck in the toilet and there is a pause as we see him at the top of the cistern.

- C. Same ensemble. Faster now with full drum backbeat. There is a new melodic idea in C^1 , leading to a vamping accompaniment pattern in C^2 . This is interrupted by an extended arpeggio passage in C^3 with the vamp resuming in C^4 . Paddington fights the shower head as if it were a snake. We then cut to the kitchen where dialogue relates to the household sleeping arrangements that will accommodate the new guest.
- D. A rapid, terraced, ascending escalation, led by semiquaver, semitonal 'cello movement and increasingly present string orchestra. Mr Brown runs up the stairs while on the phone trying to complete the purchase of additional home insurance.
- E. Full orchestral score with entry of a 'heroic' horn theme. Paddington rides the wave from the bathroom to the kitchen.

Figure 3 represents the structure of the film sequence again highlighting the two primary modes of punctuation: 1) big pauses marked in grey, and 2) punctuation through very close rhythmic congruence of musical and visual gestures, marked by numbers from 1 to 5 (with the relevant description below).

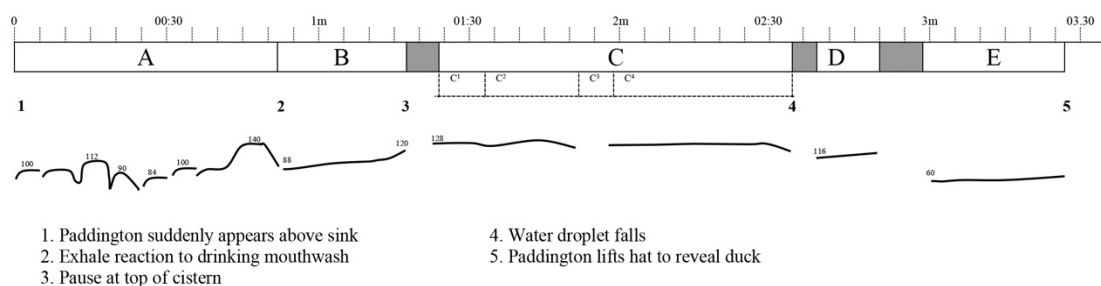


Figure 3. Punctuation Schematic - Paddington Film Scene

It is immediately apparent that the film scene uses far fewer punctuations compared to the trailer, but it is also clear that their function is primarily to define and demarcate the larger block structures in addition to highlighting specific local gestures. Each punctuation point marks the beginning or end of a new musical section, with two of these at the ends of Section B and C further marked by big pauses. Paddington first appears at (1) following chromatic anacrusis movement that pushes towards the C minor tonic and has an accompanying “whoosh” sound effect on the downbeat when he is first seen. The tempo is so variable within section A that the pulse only manages to gain any sense of purchase towards the end. There are brief bursts of “oom pah” activity which are disrupted by extensive arpeggiation and fermata creating an overarching faltering quality. The baseline 4/4 tempo is $\text{♩} = 100$, but each burst of pulse-defining activity has a significantly different tempo and creates an erratic stop-start character. This extreme intra-phrase rubato suggests the potential energy that is finally resolved in Section B, which is set off by punctuation point (2) when Paddington suddenly exhales after drinking a whole bottle of mouthwash. The momentum in this section builds more consistently with a steady and gradual increase in tempo from $\text{♩} = 88$ to $\text{♩} = 120$. The big pause at the end of this section (3) coincides with the shot of Paddington at the top of the cistern and sets up expectation of the ensuing chaos. Section C is faster and maintains a steady $\text{♩} = 128$ tempo. Initially, the piano brings in new melodic material that adds further rhythmic and directional energy (C^1), but this soon becomes an extended accompanimental vamping sequence (C^2) in order to accommodate the dialogue. This is momentarily interrupted by an extended arpeggiated passage (C^3) as we cut back to Paddington now shown in a completely flooded bathroom. At the end of this extended section (C^4) a water droplet is shown landing in Mr Brown’s cup of tea and a digitally-enhanced water droplet sound (4) acts as

punctuation interrupting the underlying musical vamp. All is not well in the bathroom above. Section D has the character of silent-film hurry music, with chromatically-rising rapid sequences at $\text{♩} = 116$. The ensemble change here incorporates broader strings, led by the cello, and has a more frenetic sense of directional movement. The final section E is mock epic with a bombastic full orchestra and an expansive heroic horn melody that accompanies Paddington as he descends the stairs in the bathtub as if he is on a raft riding the rapids.

It is worth focusing on the punctuation point at the end of this final section, because there is a useful analogy to be made with the idea of the ‘punchline’. At the point that Paddington arrives in the kitchen the musical phrasing incorporates several elements that have not appeared before in the sequence, despite its extensive and varied content (Fig. 4). The music in this section is in A Major and four punctuating, chromatically-rising chords lead to a tonic seventh. These give way to a string trill on the tonic over which an accordion enters playing a picaresque leaning note from the minor to the major third (C-natural to C-sharp). Over this Paddington says, ‘nice weather for the ducks’ and then as he lifts his hat to reveal a rubber, yellow bath duck, we hear simultaneously the tonic pizzicato resolution of the music, a duck squeak sound, and the sound of rushing water that has been trapped in the hat. It would be hard to squeeze in any more comedic concluding gestures in this section if one tried: directional, escalating, punctuating final chords, a trill, leaning note to the 3rd on an instrument with a completely fresh timbre, a resolving tonic pizzicato, and rhythmically congruent accompanying sound effects. The function of the punchline, in Raskin’s linguistic formulation was to provide new information and to bring a script opposition to the surface. It seems to me that the appearance of the accordion, out of nowhere, is a musical equivalent of Raskin’s script opposition, signalling that this is the end of the

narrative-musical joke, further articulated by the expectant trill and synchronous audiovisual gestures that interact with the dialogue. We might also return to the comments made by Goldmark at the beginning of this chapter where musical comedic gestures are not identified as singular hits but a collection of comic resources. Despite the fact that the film sequence has less internal punctuation that can be aligned with the notion of the jabline, the longer time scale allows it to develop parametric increases in tempo and to create demarcated sections. At a key moment it creates something equivalent to the punchline that can be found in narrative jokes through a rich interaction of musical and visual gestural patterns .

Paddington: 'Nice weather for the ducks.'

The musical score is written for strings, accordion, and a sound effect track. The strings play a series of chords in the key of D major (two sharps). The accordion plays a melody that starts with a trill on the first note, followed by a series of eighth notes. The sound effect track includes a 'squeak' (a short, high-pitched note), a 'splash' (a short, low-pitched note), and a 'pizz' (a short, high-pitched note). The score is in 4/4 time and consists of four measures.

Fig. 4. Paddington's Punchline

Conclusions

I have argued that it is productive to analyse the structural and rhythmic organisation, and the accretion of audiovisual punctuations, drawing initially from linguistic theories, in order to understand more fully how audiovisual humour is constructed. This is not simply about the disruption of the performative flow of a musical joke, but rather about understanding how aspects of punctuation are held in balance in the 'telling' of the musical discourse. There is clearly a spectrum of punctuational activity that can be deployed in different ways to achieve humour both locally and structurally.

In the two examples analysed there are different approaches to the generation of humour. The trailer uses much more punctuation, analogue to the jabline, as a means of highlighting comedic energy. This is funny in the recurrent and relentless manner of slapstick comedy and is akin to classic mickey-mousing. However, the trailer also withholds a clear musical punchline as an open form of invitation to an expectant audience. If the trailer has plenty of moments of punctuation but not a definitive concluding gestural marker, or jablines without a punchline, the film scene conversely has very few jablines but a more definitive punchline. It takes its time and always uses punctuation at the service of a larger structural delineation as well as highlighting the local gestural action. Most importantly it makes the conclusion of the joke sequence more clear. This is not achieved solely through rhythmic punctuation but through a musical semantic reveal that evokes Raskin's notion of the script opposition. Audiovisual materials that have not been present throughout the rest of the musical discourse and a series of congruent gestural audiovisual materials suddenly announce: 'See, I told you it was funny.'

Audioviewers will find these examples amusing to differing degrees and may consider one approach more successful than the other. For me, the energy of the trailer is especially intoxicating and its consistent close synchronisation makes me laugh every time, but both scenes construct their humour very skilfully. I am reminded of Kevin Donnelly's insightful discussion of synchronisation in his book *Occult Aesthetics* (2014) where he characterised a lack of synchrony as potentially disturbing for the viewer and suggested that points of synchronisation between sound and image can act as moments of comfort in otherwise messy audiovisual environments. Indeed, he argued that the interplay between these two states is the *central* dynamic in audiovisual culture. In extending this idea, I have suggested that the interaction between different

synchronous states is especially important in the realisation of audiovisual humour, that synchronicity is deployed in different ways according to the function of the media, and that punctuation can be mapped onto the structural and performative elements of jokes. At the same time, there is perhaps something linguistics could learn from thinking about the flow of music or aspects of musicality. While debates about talk-in interaction and prosody develop, consideration of musicality could provide a useful framework that contributes towards broader understanding of performative humour.

The nature of audiovisual synchronisation, whether that is in relation to rhythmic connection, phrasing, gesture, flow and its disruption, and the musicality of this interplay, is fundamental to the impact of comedy sequences. This goes far beyond considerations of any purely denotative meaning in the music, and reflects the sonic qualities of delivery, highlighting the physical interaction of music and images over time. Punctuation is an important aspect of the way music helps to make scenes more funny and contributes to the kind of musical flow where varying degrees of synchronous micro gestures and macro structures work together in kinetic audiovisual architecture.

References

- Archakis, Argiris, Giakoumelou, Maria, Papazachariou, Dimitris, and Tsakona, Villy (2010) 'The Prosodic Framing of Humour in Conversational Narratives: Evidence from Greek Data,' *Journal of Greek Linguistics* 10, 187–212.
- Attardo, Salvatore (1994) *Linguistic Theories of Humor*, Mouton de Gruyter.

- _____. (1996). 'Humor Theory beyond Jokes: The Treatment of Humorous Texts at Large', in *Automatic Interpretation and Generation of Verbal Humor*, edited by Joris Hulstijn and Anton Nijholt, 81–94. University of Twente.
- _____. (1997). 'The Semantic Foundation of Cognitive Theories of Humor', *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research* 10 (4): 395–420
- _____. (1998) 'The Analysis of Humorous Narratives', *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, 11: 3: 231–260.
- _____. (2001) *Humorous Texts: A Semantic and Pragmatic Analysis*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Attardo, Salvatore, Hempelmann, Christian, and Di Maio, Sara (2002) 'Script oppositions and logical mechanisms: Modeling incongruities and their resolutions', *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, 15 (1), 3–46.
- Attardo, Salvatore, Pickering, Lucy, and Baker, Amanda (2011) 'Prosodic and multimodal markers of humor in conversation', *Pragmatics & Cognition*, 19: 2, 224–247.
- Caranicas, Peter (2015) 'Paddington's CG Artisans: "We Put the Life in His Eyes" ', *Variety*, January 23rd. <https://variety.com/2015/artisans/production/paddington-bears-cg-artisans-we-put-the-life-in-his-eyes-1201410121/> (last accessed 30/04/2022)
- Chion, Michel (1994) *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deaville, James and Malkinson, Agnes (2014) 'A Laugh a Second? Music and Sound in Comedy Trailers', *Music Sound and the Moving Image*, 8: 2, 121–140.
- Donnelly, K. J. (2014) *Occult Aesthetics: Synchronization in sound film*, New York: Oxford University Press.

- Gironzetti, Eliza (2017) 'Prosodic and Multimodal Markers of Humor', 400–413, in Attardo, Salvatore, ed. *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Humor*, New York: Routledge.
- Goldmark, Daniel (2005) *Tunes for 'Toons: Music and the Hollywood Cartoon*, Berkeley, California; London: University of California Press.
- Grayson, Kyle (2013) 'How to Read Paddington Bear: Liberalism and the Foreign Subject in *A Bear Called Paddington*,' *The British Journal of Political and International Relations*, 15, 378–393.
- Hunt, Peter and Sands, Karen (2000) 'British empire and post-empire children's literature', 39–54, in R. McGillis (ed.), *Voices of the Other: Children's Literature and the Postcolonial Context*, New York: Garland Publishing.
- Kernan, Lisa (2004) *Coming Attractions: Reading American Movie Trailers*, Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Norrick, Neal (2001) 'On the conversational performance of narrative jokes: Toward an account of timing', *Humor* 14: 3, 255–274 .
- Pape, Danny (2015) 'Paddington – An Interview with composer Nick Urata' <https://www.flickreel.com/paddington-an-interview-with-composer-nick-urata/> (last accessed tbc)
- Raskin, Victor and Attardo, Salvatore (1991). "Script theory revis(it)ed: joke similarity and joke representation model", *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, 4: 3–4, 293–348.
- Raskin, Victor (1985). *Semantic mechanisms of humor*, Dordrecht, Netherlands: D. Reidel.
- Raskin, Victor, ed. (2008). *The Primer of Humor Research*. Mouton de Gruyter.

- Smith, Angela (2006) 'Paddington Bear: A case study of immigration and otherness', *Children's Literature in Education*, 37: 1, 35–50.
- Smith, Philip (2020) 'Paddington Bear and the Erasure of Difference', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 45: 1, 25–42.
- Takamoto, Iwao (2009) *Iwao Takamoto: My Life with a Thousand Characters*, Jackson, University Press of Mississippi.
- Tsakona, Villy (2003) 'Jablines in Narrative Jokes', *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, 16: 3, 315–329.
- Wennerstrom, Ann (2011) 'Rich pitch: The Humorous Effects of Deaccent and L Plus H* Pitch Accent', *Pragmatics & Cognition*, 19: 2, 310–332.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qFuzMlfZGWM> (last accessed 30/04/2022).

² It describes the genre of the piece as 'orchestral: whimsical fantasy' and provides a further description of it as: 'Propulsive and stately featuring propulsive strings and percussion creating a marvellous, magnificent mood' (<https://sencitmusic.sourceaudio.com/>).