

“Do You Serve Lawyers and Politicians Here?”  
Stereotyped Lawyers and Politicians  
in American Jokes and Anti-Proverbs





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## PREFACE

*What's the strongest argument against both theories of origin? Politicians and lawyers. Who in their right mind would create (or evolve into) these species? (Joke)*<sup>1</sup>

### Organization and Aim of the Book

The main aim of the book *Do You Serve Lawyers and Politicians Here?": Stereotyped Lawyers and Politicians in Anglo-American Jokes and Anti-Proverbs* is to address stereotypical traits of lawyers and politicians as they are reflected in Anglo-American jokes and anti-proverbs, also known as proverb transformations. The book consists of two parts divided into seven chapters, followed by the Conclusion and Reference. The first part of the book, organized into five chapters, addresses American lawyer jokes. In the introduction to the first part I review the background of American lawyer jokes. While the first chapter makes an attempt to analyze the stereotypical traits of lawyers in the jokes, the second chapter examines the dominant stereotypical features of lawyers compared to those of doctors and representatives of other professions. The focus of the third chapter is on a small segment of American lawyer jokes, namely, jokes in which lawyers are compared to animals. The fourth chapter of the book treats jokes the butt of which are lawyers as candidates for removal from society or, more often than not, extermination. The fifth chapter focuses on the following question: What awaits lawyers after they die? The second part of the book, divided into two chapters, concentrates on lawyers and politicians as the most frequently mocked professions and occupations in Anglo-American anti-proverbs. The introduction to the second part addresses briefly the background of anti-proverb research and terminology, and also points out various popular themes treated in Anglo-American proverb alterations, among which are various professions and occupations. The last two chapters of the book focus on the two most frequently parodied professions and occupations in

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<sup>1</sup> <http://jokeparty.com/>

Anglo-American anti-proverbs, the figure of the lawyer and the politician. While the sixth chapter of this book treats stereotypical traits of lawyers, the seventh chapter addresses the main features of politicians as reflected in anti-proverbs.

## **Acknowledgements**

The idea of exploring American legal humor came to me after reading the book *A jog humora* [The Humor of the Law] (see Fenyvesi 2003), as well as after conducting an interview with the editor of the book, Associate Professor of Law, Hungarian lawyer Csaba Fenyvesi, about humor in the Hungarian legal system (see T. Litovkina 2009b; 2010c). I would like to express my gratitude to Csaba Fenyvesi for the inspiration he gave me. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Fionnuala Carson Williams, David Karla, and Carl Lindahl for their easy willingness in proofreading some parts of the book. In addition, I would like to express many thanks to Judit Szöllősy for her kind help with ‘anglicizing’ the text, and for her critical comments and suggestions. Thanks also go to Barnabás Vajda, Andrea Puskás, and Mária Bartal, who have contributed to the reviewing, editing and publication of the volume. And last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to all my colleagues, friends, teachers and students who have shared and discussed with me their views and ideas on humor and proverbs, in particular to Salvatore Attardo, Péter Barta, Dorota Brzozowska, Władysław Chłopiccki, Christie Davies, Hrisztalina Hrisztova-Gotthardt, Imola Küllős, Rita Mayer, Wolfgang Mieder, Victor Raskin, Katalin Vargha, and Vilmos Voigt. I would also like to express thanks to the memory of the late Ariadna Ivanovna Kuznetsova, my thesis supervisor at Moscow Lomonosov University, whose personality and love for teaching have continually illuminated my life and academic career.



# PART I



## INTRODUCTION

In the early 1980s, a new joke cycle appeared in the U.S. and has continued to flourish ever since. This is the lawyer joke cycle. Lawyer jokes have been published in book form (to name just a few, see Wilde 1982; Knott 1990; Galanter 2005), and have also been displayed on various American websites. According to a 1997 Internet search by a legal journalist (see Yas 1997: 11), 3,473 sites were devoted to lawyer jokes, while only 17 sites displayed jokes about salesmen, 39 sites were devoted to accountant jokes, and 227 sites to doctor jokes. Theo Meder explains the sharp increase of lawyer jokes in recent years by the high legalization of American society. He stresses: “The quantity of lawyer jokes equals the rise of the number and the social status of lawyers, the excessive wages of top-lawyers and their sky-high compensation claims” (Meder 2008: 448). In his opinion, however, this cannot be the only reason for the proliferation of lawyer jokes. “There are feelings of discontent about the impenetrable logic of justice, but above all the dominant ‘vulture culture’ of *suing*, *claiming* and *cashing*, as exposed in the news media” (Meder 2008: 449). Christie Davies goes even further, stating:

America is governed not by men but by lawyers... Lawyers lie at the very heart of American society. American lawyers are the most American of Americans, and they represent the central American values of social mobility – as opposed to entrenched and inherited distinctions – and entail – due process and procedure as opposed to personal discretion and, of course, the pursuit of money. The lawyers are the very essence of what it means to be an American. (Davies 2008: 373)

As Marc Galanter points out, before 1980, the vast majority of jokes about lawyers dealt with topics such as “lawyers corrupting discourse, fleecing clients, fomenting strife, fraternizing with the devil, and compromising justice” (Galanter 2008: 390). The jokes which have added to the corpus since 1980 were joined by “a new set of themes – jokes about lawyers as

morally deficient, as betrayers of trust, as objects of scorn, and as desirable candidates for extermination” (Galanter 2008: 390). According to Galanter, almost two thirds of the jokes which have been added to the corpus since 1980 belong to these “new wave” categories (Galanter 2008: 390).

The aggressive tendency of jokes has been recognized since the publication of Sigmund Freud’s essay, “Wit and Humor in the Unconscious” in 1905 (see Freud 1960 [1905]), and has also been discussed by many humor researchers. Hostility towards law and lawyers has been a widespread phenomenon for a long time *throughout* the world. Grant Gilmore in “The Ages of American Law” stresses: “In most societies at most periods the legal profession has been heartily disliked by all non-lawyers: a recurrent dream of social reformers has been that the law should be (and can be) simplified and purified in such a way that the class of lawyers can be done away with. The dream has never withstood the cold light of waking reality” (Gilmore 1977: 1). The book entitled “Devil’s Advocates: The Unnatural History of Lawyers” (Roth & Roth 1989) treated the scorn heaped on lawyers throughout human history, and has even questioned the reasons for civilization putting up with lawyers at all. His compilation of negative anecdotes about lawyers from early times to the present includes numerous passages from the Bible, from literature, as well as from the mouths of lawyers themselves. In 1911 the following humorous definition of a lawyer appeared: “LAWYER, n. One skilled in circumvention of the law” (Bierce 1911, in Horrigan 2003: 64; see also <http://www.dict.org/bin/Dict>). This definition has been quoted in many legal books ever since.

Even Time Magazine epitomized the feelings philosophers and writers have had against the legal profession:

Lawyers have never been terribly popular, particularly among philosophers and writers. Plato spoke of their “small and unrighteous” souls, and Keats said: “I think we may class the lawyer in the natural history of monsters.” Thomas More left lawyers out of his Utopia, and Shakespeare made his feelings known in that famous line from Henry

VI, Part II: “The first thing we do, let’s kill all the lawyers.”<sup>2</sup>

The famous quotation “The first thing we do, let’s kill all the lawyers” by William Shakespeare has provided fertile soil for endless transformation, as in the titles of newspaper articles about lawyers, e.g. “First Thing We Do Is Kill All the Lawyer Jokes” (Yas 1997: 11), “Modest Alternative to Killing All Lawyers” (Miller 1991: A16); “Kill All The Lawyers: The Decline and Fall of the Legal Profession” (Bradley 2012).

The hostile titles of some books of jokes and cartoons depicting lawyers also speak for themselves, e.g., “Dead Lawyers and Other Pleasant Thoughts” (Miller 1993); “Truly Tasteless Lawyer Jokes” (Knott 1990); “The Lawyer’s Guide to Cheating, Stealing and Amassing Obscene Wealth” (Egan 1992). The perennial criticism of attorneys is illustrated as “amoral [...] guns for hire” (Horrigan 2003: 64).

In “Legal Ethics: A Comparative Study” (Hazard & Dondi 2004) common complaints about lawyers from around the world were classified into five general categories:

- abuse of litigation in various ways, including using dilatory tactics and false evidence and making frivolous arguments to the courts;
- preparation of false documentation, such as false deeds, contracts, or wills;
- deceiving clients and other persons and misappropriating property; procrastination in dealings with clients; and
- charging excessive fees. (Hazard & Dondi 2004: 60)

At the end of the 20th century the dominant theme of American lawyer jokes was summarized as: “Lawyers are hard to understand; they charge too much; they are miserable people; they lie all the time; and they should die” (Yas 1997: 11), as well as the following: “Lawyers are clever, tricky, greedy and untrustworthy” (Galanter 1998: 827; for more on the stereotypical traits

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<sup>2</sup> “Those #@%!!! Lawyers,” *Time*, 10 Apr. 1978: 56, quoted in Bander 1993: 166.

of lawyers in American lawyer jokes, see Galanter 1998, 2005, 2008; Davies 2008; 2011: 184–212).

Why is it that it's the lawyer and not the representative of some other profession or occupation who is permanently made fun of in so many American jokes? What are the dominant stereotypical traits of a lawyer in these jokes? And does the lawyer's stereotype in American lawyer jokes contain any truth? These and many other questions could be asked in regard to American lawyer jokes.

The first part of this book focuses on the stereotypical traits of lawyers in American lawyer jokes. The first chapter examines stereotypical traits of lawyers in the jokes, while the second chapter treats the dominant stereotypical features of lawyers compared to those of doctors and representatives of other professions (e.g., prostitutes, priests, politicians). The focus of the third chapter is on a small segment of American lawyer jokes, namely, jokes in which lawyers are compared to animals. While the fourth chapter of the book makes an attempt to analyze jokes the butt of which are lawyers as candidates for removal from society or, more frequently, extermination, the fifth chapter focuses on the following question: What awaits lawyers after they die?

While certain stereotypical traits of lawyers occur pervasively in the texts of the jokes, others appear in only a few. For this reason, my discussion may at times seem uneven and the treatment of certain thematic categories might seem to be either narrower or broader. It must also be mentioned here that a number of our jokes treat several themes simultaneously. Such examples could be discussed in various chapters of this book. All the jokes quoted and discussed in the book can be found with references to their Internet sources provided in footnotes. The vast majority of jokes were collected from hundreds of websites in spring 2009.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In such a case a date of access is not provided. In all other cases dates of access are given.

## CHAPTER 1

### Stereotyped Lawyers in American Lawyers Jokes <sup>4</sup>

*Isn't it a shame how 99% of the lawyers give the whole profession a bad name?*<sup>5</sup>

*Q: If you have a bad lawyer, why not get a new one?*

*A: Changing lawyers is like moving to a different deck chair on the Titanic. (Joke)*<sup>6</sup>

*But is there any reason to believe that, among lawyers, the best are much better than the worst? I can find none. (H. L. Mencken)*<sup>7</sup>

### The focus of the present chapter

In the first chapter of this book the most stereotypic (and mostly, negative) traits of lawyers are going to be discussed and exemplified (for more on negative traits of lawyers in American lawyer jokes, see also Galanter 1998; 2005, 2008; Davies 2008; 2011: 184–212). The chapter depicts lawyers as ignorant people, skillful manipulators, and inveterate liars. It also makes an attempt to analyze lawyers' greed, high income and stinginess. Furthermore, it also demonstrates various ways in which lawyers take advantage (including sexual) of their clients. Last but not least, the chapter also provides an analysis of other stereotypical qualities of lawyers treated in jokes, such as corruption and dishonesty, pushiness and arrogance, cynicism and snobbishness, among many others.

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4 An earlier, shorter, version of this chapter was published under the title *Greed, lies and negotiable justice: Stereotyped lawyers in American lawyer jokes* (see T. Litovkina 2011a).

5 <http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Humor/Lawyer.htm>

6 <http://www.mytidbits.us/lawyer-jokes.html>

7 H. L. Mencken (1880–1956) was an American social critic, journalist and humorist.

## Discussion

Let me start this discussion with one of the most basic stereotypes of a lawyer profession, **lying**:

How can you tell when a lawyer is lying?  
His lips are moving.<sup>8</sup>

This question-answer joke exists about politicians as well (for more, see Chapter 7).

The following two jokes play on the homonymy of the words *to lie* (to deceive), as opposed *to lie*<sup>9</sup> (to be found, exist, or even to be buried):

What do lawyers do after they die?  
They lie still.<sup>10</sup>

How does an attorney sleep?  
First he lies on one side, and then he lies on the other.<sup>11</sup>

According to a number of jokes, **honest lawyers simply don't exist**:

What do you get when you run an “honest lawyer” contest?  
No winners.<sup>12</sup>

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8 [http://wiki.answers.com/Q/How\\_can\\_you\\_tell\\_when\\_a\\_lawyer\\_is\\_lying](http://wiki.answers.com/Q/How_can_you_tell_when_a_lawyer_is_lying)

9 These words are also some of the most frequently used words for punning in Anglo-American proverb transformations (see T. Litovkina & Mieder 2006):

Truth lies at the bottom of a well, but if it lies, how can it be the truth? (Esar 1968: 829)  
{Truth lies at the bottom of a well}

As you have made your bed, why lie about it? (Berman 1997: 25) {As you make your bed, so you must lie on it}

Politics makes strange bedfellows, but they are always willing to lie on their own side. (Esar 1968: 616) {Politics makes strange bedfellows}

10 <http://www.lawyer-jokes.us/modules/news/article.php?storyid=77>

11 [http://wilk4.com/humor/humorm353\\_lawyers.htm](http://wilk4.com/humor/humorm353_lawyers.htm)

12 <http://www.extremelysmart.com/humor/lawyerjokes.php>



Diogenes went to look for an honest lawyer.  
“How’s it going?” someone asked.  
“Not too bad,” said Diogenes. “I still have my lantern.”<sup>13</sup>

In American lawyer jokes, honest lawyers are even compared to “mythological creatures”, or “UFOs”, because “You always hear about them, but you never see them”:

Santa Claus, the tooth fairy, an honest lawyer and an old drunk are walking down the street together when they simultaneously spot a hundred dollar bill. Who gets it?  
The old drunk, of course, the other three are mythological creatures.<sup>14</sup>

What do honest lawyers and UFOs have in common?  
You always hear about them, but you never see them.<sup>15</sup>

Another theme brought up in many lawyer jokes is that lawyers should **not be trusted** under any circumstances. The following joke is a clear indication that even lawyer-partners can’t rely on each other:

The two partners in a law firm were having lunch when suddenly one of them jumped up and said, “I have to go back to the office – I forgot to lock the safe!” The other partner replied, “What are you worried about? We’re both here.”<sup>16</sup>

Other frequent traits of the legal profession, the **skillful ability to manipulate and persuade**, as well as **cunning and slyness**, are reflected in a joke about a cunning lawyer and gullible doctor waiting for the police to arrive after a car accident (see Chapter 2).

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13 <http://www.scroom.com/SCROOMtimes/Humor/Lawyer.shtml>

14 <http://www.scroom.com/SCROOMtimes/Humor/Lawyer.shtml>

15 <http://www.lawyer-jokes.us/modules/news/article.php?storyid=80>

16 [http://7thspace.com/entertainment/jokes/lawyer\\_jokes/page-2.html](http://7thspace.com/entertainment/jokes/lawyer_jokes/page-2.html)

In the text below,<sup>17</sup> a lawyer's "amazing argument in court" proves so convincing, that his client begins to think that maybe he hadn't committed the crime he is charged with:

Lawyer: "Now that you have been acquitted, will you tell me truly? Did you steal the car?" Client: "After hearing your amazing argument in court this morning, I'm beginning to think I didn't."<sup>18</sup>

Nowadays, American **lawyers' fees are disproportionately high** compared to the services they offer. Not surprisingly, quite a lot of jokes treat this topic:

A man phones a lawyer and asks, "How much would you charge for just answering three simple questions?"  
The lawyer replies, "A thousand dollars."  
"A thousand dollars!" exclaims the man. "That's very expensive isn't it?"  
"It certainly is," says the lawyer. "Now, what's your third question?"<sup>19</sup>

Our next joke belongs to the so called light-bulb joke cycle:

How many lawyers does it take to change a light bulb?  
How many can you afford?<sup>20</sup>

The light-bulb joke cycle about Polacks first appeared in the late 1960s and 1970s, e.g., "How many Polacks does it take to screw in a light bulb? Five

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17 In his book, Galanter (2008: 391) points out that this joke harkens back to the 1870s and cites one of its earlier versions:

A man in North Carolina, who was saved from conviction for horse-stealing by the powerful plea of his lawyer, after his acquittal by the jury, was asked by the lawyer:

"Honor bright, now, Bill, you did steal that horse, didn't you?"

"Now, look a-here, Judge," was the reply, "I allers did think I stole that hoss, but since I learn youre speech to that 'ere jury, I'll be doggoned if I ain't got my doubts about it"

(Brown 1879: 84, quoted in Galanter 2008: 391).

18 <http://www.best-funny-jokes.com/lawyer-jokes-6710>

19 <http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Humor/Lawyer.htm>

20 <http://www.ajokes.com/jokes/5402.html>

– one to hold the bulb and four to turn the ceiling (chair, ladder, house)” (Dundes 1987: 143). The original joke reflected such stereotypical features of Polacks as stupidity. The light bulb jokes were consequently adapted to lampoon other groups whose stereotypical features are also stupidity, e.g., policemen and blondes.

A lot of texts deal with the theme of **lawyers’ greed, stinginess, and fondness for money**:

Why is money green?

Because lawyers pick it up before it is ripe.<sup>21</sup>

Q: How do you get a group of lawyers to smile for a photo?

A: Just say, “Fees!”<sup>22</sup>

Nowadays, lawyers are often called “money grabbers”. This is one of the reasons why a man from the joke below misinterprets the words of the lawyer:

A man went to his lawyer and said, “I would like to make a will but I don’t know exactly how to go about it.”

The lawyer said, “No problem, leave it all to me.”

The man looked somewhat upset and said, “Well, I knew you were going to take the biggest slice, but I would like to leave a little to my children too!”<sup>23</sup>

What the lawyer means by “No problem, leave it all to me” is that the client shouldn’t worry about any formalities, it’s the lawyer’s competence, he will be able to draw up the will. The client, however, thinks that the lawyer’s words mean that after his death his entire estate will go to the lawyer, and not to his children.

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21 [http://www.dmiblog.com/archives/2007/08/lawyers\\_locusts\\_and\\_rats\\_oh\\_my.html](http://www.dmiblog.com/archives/2007/08/lawyers_locusts_and_rats_oh_my.html)

22 <http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Humor/Lawyer.htm>

23 <http://www.broadcaster.org.uk/section2/jokes/lawyerjokes.html>

It is commonly held that attorneys put their hands in their clients' pockets and try to turn them out of everything. If, however, a lawyer's hands are in his own pockets, as the following text suggests, it might only be due to the fact that it's cold outside:

It was so cold last winter that I saw a lawyer with his hands in his own pockets.<sup>24</sup>

The following text is in vein with the American proverb *No matter who loses, the lawyer always wins*:

There was the cartoon showing two people fighting over a cow. One was pulling the cow by the tail; the other was pulling on the horns. Underneath was a lawyer milking the cow.<sup>25</sup>

Several texts have also been aimed at the 'lose-lose' situation of a lawsuit – for the client. If a client loses a case, he gets nothing, since a claim bankrupts him; if, however, he wins, his situation is the same, and he gets nothing, since he has to pay his lawyer's fees. Here follows a humorous definition of a contingent fee:

When asked, "What is a contingent fee?" a lawyer answered, "A contingent fee to a lawyer means, if I don't win your suit, I get nothing. If I do win it, you get nothing."<sup>26</sup>

Attorneys delay justice by **focusing on technicalities and legal procedures**. Instead of aiming for harmony and the quick resolution of their cases, they do anything possible in order to foment and prolong conflict. The better a lawyer is, the longer his case can last, i.e., the more money he makes:

What's the difference between a good lawyer and a bad lawyer?

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24 <http://www.scroom.com/SCROOMtimes/Humor/Lawyer.shtml>

25 <http://www.scroom.com/SCROOMtimes/Humor/Lawyer.shtml>

26 [http://www.notary.com.sg/law\\_jokes\\_3.htm](http://www.notary.com.sg/law_jokes_3.htm)

A bad lawyer can let a case drag out for several years. A good lawyer can make it last even longer.<sup>27</sup>

Not surprising, therefore, is the situation in which elderly, experienced lawyers, adept at prolonging a case for years, if not decades, are outraged when young, inexperienced, and still decent lawyers eagerly settle cases entrusted to them:

The lawyer's son wanted to follow in his father's footsteps, so he went to law school. He graduated with honors, and then went home to join his father's firm. At the end of his first day at work he rushed into his father's office, and said, "Father, father, in one day I broke the accident case that you've been working on for ten years!"

His father responded: "You idiot, we could live on the funding of that case for another ten years!"<sup>28</sup>

In the same vein as the proverb *Lawyers, like painters, can easily change white into black*, many lawyer jokes poke at lawyers' **ability to "change white into black"** and **reshape reality**:

A housewife, an accountant and a lawyer were asked "How much is 2+2?"

The housewife replies: "Four!"

The accountant says: "I think it's either 3 or 4. Let me run those figures through my spreadsheet one more time."

The lawyer pulls the drapes, dims the lights and asks in a hushed voice, "How much do you want it to be?"<sup>29</sup>

The text above stresses the "hushed" tone of the lawyer, who is eager to show his clients that he is willing to do anything, even falsifying facts, in order to satisfy them. Accordingly, there is no need for a lawyer to search for an

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27 <http://www.funnyhumor.com/jokes/766.php>

28 <http://www.desi-jokes.com/>

29 <http://www.scroom.com/SCROOMtimes/Humor/Lawyer.shtml>

objectively correct, truthful answer. As it has been observed:

Lawyers make claims not because they believe them to be true, but because they believe them to be legally efficacious. If they happen to be true, then all the better. (Campos 1998: 13, quoted in Galanter 2008: 393)

Lawyers are called **thieves** in a number of jokes (as well as in the titles of some books about lawyers, e.g., “Lawyers and Thieves”, see Grutman & Thomas 1990):

If you see a lawyer on a bicycle, why don't you swerve to hit him?  
It might be your bicycle.<sup>30</sup>

In the jokes quoted above, we have seen that lawyers are stereotypically shown as greedy, hungry for money, and big liars. Moreover, they are also ready to falsify reality and lie in court in order to help their clients to win their cases. What's worse, attorneys **deceive their own clients**. One of the easiest ways clients might be deceived is through **billing them for a service which had not been provided, or for the time not spent on their case**:

Q: Did you hear about the new microwave lawyer?

A: You spend eight minutes in his office and get billed as if you'd been there eight hours.<sup>31</sup>

A client who felt his legal bill was too high asked his lawyer to itemize costs. The statement included this item:

“I was walking down the street and saw you on the other side. I walked to the corner to cross at the light, crossed the street and walked quickly to catch up with you. I got close and saw it wasn't you. – \$50.00.”<sup>32</sup>

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30 <http://jokeparty.com/>

31 [http://www.kaitaia.com/jokes/Lawyers/Lawyer\\_Jokes13.htm](http://www.kaitaia.com/jokes/Lawyers/Lawyer_Jokes13.htm)

32 <http://www.resourcesforattorneys.com/highbilljoke.html>

**Extorting their clients' money and simultaneously taking sexual advantage** of them is a theme of many further lawyer jokes. In quite a number of these jokes, combining the topics of *sexuality* and *money grabbing*, the word “screw” is used as a pun. Webster’s lists the following connotations for “screw”: “to extort or practice extortion on; as, he *screwed* me out of money. [Slang.]”, as opposed to “have[ing] sexual intercourse with. [Slang.]” (Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary 1983: 1629). The following text plays on these connotations:

Two lawyers were shipwrecked on a desert island. After several weeks, they saw a beautiful mermaid swim by. One lawyer says to the other, “Hey, let’s screw her.” The other one asks, “Out of what?”<sup>33</sup>

The joke below, although not using the word “screwing” but only referring to it (“same service”), plays on two different meanings of the word:

Why does the Law Society prohibit sex between lawyers and their clients?

To prevent clients from being billed twice for essentially the same service.<sup>34</sup>

Why are there so many light bulb jokes about lawyers? One of the reasons might be that the word “screw” offers an excellent opportunity to make a pun on its different connotations, some of which have been discussed above.

In the two jokes below, also belonging to the so called light-bulb joke cycle discussed above, the main meaning of the word “screw” is implied (which is defined by Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary (1983: 1629) as “to twist; turn; tighten”). The first text illustrates a stereotypic trait of a lawyer, **egocentricity**:

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33 <http://www.mifsudbonnici.com/lexnet/jokes/index.html>

34 <http://www.kaila.pl/humor/lawyers.htm>

Q: How many lawyers does it take to screw in a light bulb?

A: One; the lawyer holds it while the rest of the world revolves around him.<sup>35</sup>

The opinion of people that **lawyers overcomplicate things or else do unnecessary things**, thus creating “chaos and confusion”, is reflected in the following two jokes. The first one not only stresses that there are great numbers of lawyers and they do unnecessary work, but also that they do it only to make extra money:

Q: How many lawyers does it take to screw in a light bulb?

A: Three. One to climb the ladder. One to shake it. And one to sue the ladder company.<sup>36</sup> (for a discussion of another joke belonging to the light-bulb joke cycle, see Chapter 2)

According to the second joke, lawyers **don't do anything**:

Lawyers are safe from the threat of automation taking over their professions. No one would build a robot to do nothing.<sup>37</sup>

A lawyer **would do anything in order to get potential new clients**, with the **pushiness** typical of his profession. Regardless of circumstances, whether it's immediately after a car accident, or during an emergency landing which might could potentially lead to a fatal catastrophe, attorneys in jokes try to pass out their business cards, in the hope of making money on mischief, tragedy, and death:

Q. Why is it that many lawyers have broken noses?

A. *From chasing parked ambulances.*<sup>38</sup>

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35 <http://war3.incgamers.com/forums/archive/index.php/t-28999.html>

36 [http://www.lawsongs.com/lawyer\\_jokes.html](http://www.lawsongs.com/lawyer_jokes.html)

37 <http://www.terry.co.uk/jokes02.html>

38 <http://www.skepticfiles.org/weird/lawyers.htm>



Noticing they were having engine trouble, the pilot instructed the crew to have the passengers take their seats and prepare for an emergency landing. A few moments later, the pilot asked the attendants if everyone was buckled in and ready.

“We’re all set back here, Captain,” an attendant replied. “Except for one lawyer who is still going around passing out his business cards.”<sup>39</sup>

In spite of the fact that the vast majority of lawyer jokes stress lawyers’ cleverness, intelligence, and cunning, traits that are a boon in their work, according to a few jokes, some lawyers are **stupid**, although stupidity is not their stereotypical feature (see Chapter 2, our discussion of a joke about a lawyer who is suffering from a brain tumor). Accordingly, the havoc created by an **ignorant lawyer** is a common theme of lawyer jokes. The one below implies that the most unintelligent lawyers occupy the most trusted and socially respectable position, that of a judge:

Q: How do you greet a lawyer with an IQ of 50?

A: “Good morning, your honor.”<sup>40</sup>

**Snobbishness** is another feature typically associated with the legal profession. Lawyers, more than representatives of any other profession or occupation, like showing off their luxurious yachts, villas, cars, watches, and other status symbols. The following joke emphasizes a lawyer’s snobbishness:

A lawyer was driving his big BMW down the highway, singing to himself, “I love my BMW, I love my BMW.” Focusing on his car, not his driving, he smashed into a tree. He miraculously survived, but his car was totaled. “My BMW! My BMW!” he sobbed.

A Good Samaritan drove by and cried out, “Sir, sir, you’re bleeding! And my god, your left arm is gone!”

The lawyer, horrified, screamed “My Rolex! My Rolex!”<sup>41</sup>

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39 <http://www.broadcaster.org.uk/section2/jokes/lawyerjokes.html>

40 [http://www.lawsongs.com/lawyer\\_jokes.html](http://www.lawsongs.com/lawyer_jokes.html)

41 [http://www.indianjokes.in/Lawyers\\_jokes/joke-827.asp](http://www.indianjokes.in/Lawyers_jokes/joke-827.asp)

At first after the accident the lawyer sobs seeing his beloved BMW (one of the main status symbols of lawyers) was totally destroyed. We know that it was focusing on his expensive car and not on driving that caused his accident. When the lawyer is, however, told that his left arm is gone, he doesn't even express any sorrow for it, and doesn't take any medical precautions; he is too wrapped up in grieving over the loss of his precious watch (a second status symbol).

**Cynicism** is another negative trait of many lawyers. In the same vein as the previous text, the following joke not only reflects the snobbishness but also the cynicism of an "offended lawyer" who, after having pumped his client out of all his money, bought a new yacht, another status symbol:

"You're a cheat", shouted the client at his lawyer. "You're a scoundrel! You've kept me hanging (about) for months and got rich on my case alone!"

"That's gratitude", said the offended lawyer. "And right after I named my new yacht after you."<sup>42</sup>

In hopes of asking for higher fees, a young, inexperienced lawyer will go to great lengths to **impress potential clients, to show his importance and business acumen**, as expressed in the following text:

A young lawyer, starting up his private practice, was very anxious to impress potential clients. When he saw the first visitor to his office come through the door, he immediately picked up his phone and spoke into it, "I'm sorry, but my caseload is so tremendous that I'm not going to be able to look into your problem for at least a month. I'll have to get back to you then." He then turned to the man who had just walked in, and said, "Now, what can I do for you?"

"Nothing," replied the man. "I'm here to hook up your phone."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> [http://www.ehow.com/how\\_2227559\\_lawyer-jokes.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_2227559_lawyer-jokes.html)

<sup>43</sup> <http://blogaught.com/goldusero7p/2009/03/29/a-young-lawyer-starting-up-his-private-practice/>

What makes the behavior of the lawyer from the text above so ridiculous is that he wants to impress his potential client, and instead the person opening the door it's the telephone technician, the person who better than anyone else knows that the lawyer's telephone is not hooked up.

And in the same vein, the joke below stresses lawyers' **arrogance**:

Q: What's the difference between God and an attorney?

A: God doesn't think he's an attorney.<sup>44</sup>

Some lawyers are so **lazy** that they are even reluctant to make love:

Did you hear about the lawyer who was so lazy that he married a pregnant woman?<sup>45</sup>

Attorneys are just **parasites**. Many jokes even draw a parallel between lawyers and ticks, parasites which live on blood (see Chapter 3). The next text shows lawyers' parasitism while engaged in sexual activities, when they expect their sexual partners to "do all the work":

A new female associate was romantically ambushed in a darkened room at her new firm, to her surprise and delight. When asked by her best friend to identify the new lover, she was puzzled: "All I know for sure is that it was a partner – he made me do all the work."<sup>46</sup>

Some jokes state that attorneys are not even **human beings**, and there is hardly any chance for them of becoming one:

What do lawyers and sperm have in common?

Both have a 1 in 3,000,000 chance of becoming a human being.<sup>47</sup>

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44 <http://www.funnyandjokes.com/lawyer-q-and-a.html>

45 <http://www.kaila.pl/humor/lawyers.htm>

46 <http://www.9timezones.com/ia/law.htm>

47 [http://wilk4.com/humor/humorm353\\_lawyers.htm](http://wilk4.com/humor/humorm353_lawyers.htm)

Why should lawyers be buried 100 feet deep?  
Because deep down, they're really good people.<sup>48</sup>

The text above expresses the wish of people to eradicate lawyers as a class, and belongs to the theme discussed in Chapter 4 of the present book.

Lawyers are frequently asked to **defend criminals**. And as we know from a well-known proverb and from everyday life experience, *Evil communications corrupt good manners*. A number of jokes in our material deal with criminal defense lawyers, a special breed of lawyer specializing in the defense of those charged with crimes:

What do you call a person who assists a criminal in breaking the law before he is arrested?

An accomplice.

What do you call a person who assists a criminal in breaking the law after he is arrested?

A lawyer.<sup>49</sup>

Or, as the next rhyme suggests:

Between grand theft and a legal fee,  
There only stands a law degree.<sup>50</sup>

Lawyers prefer **defending rich and dishonest clients rather than poor and innocent ones**. This might be the reason why in the joke below no lawyers wanted to defend a prisoner:

“How is it that you can’t get a lawyer to defend you?” the judge asked the prisoner.

“Well, yer honor, it’s like this. As soon as those lawyers found out I

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48 <http://www.nerdtests.com/jokes.php?id=1621>

49 [http://wilk4.com/humor/humorm353\\_lawyers.htm](http://wilk4.com/humor/humorm353_lawyers.htm)

50 <http://www.vakilno1.com/lawonliner.htm>

didn't steal the money, they wouldn't have anything to do with me."<sup>51</sup>

Indeed, the results of a survey proved that when asked whether lawyers would "work as hard for poor clients as for clients who are rich and important," about sixty percent of Americans gave a negative answer (Curran 1977: 234).

Contributing to fast impoverishment of their clients, **lawyers stop working for them when they run out of money to pay their fees**. Thus, the attorney's creed is humorously defined as:

Lawyer's creed:

A man is innocent until proven broke.<sup>52</sup>

Not surprisingly, after lawyers have pumped their clients out of all their money, they become reluctant to continue further defense:

A man went to a lawyer for a defense after he had been caught embezzling millions from his employer. He was concerned about going to jail, but was told by the attorney, "Don't worry—you'll never go to jail with all that money." The lawyer was right. When the man went to prison, he didn't have a dime.<sup>53</sup>

**Lawyers are corrupt.** Moreover, **'Law' is frequently not synonymous with 'Justice' and 'Truth':**

What's the difference between a good lawyer and a great lawyer?

A good lawyer knows the law. A great lawyer knows the judge.<sup>54</sup>

There is a belief that **lawyers associate with the Devil** (for more, see Chapter 5). The joke below suggests that lawyers were even created on Satan's request,

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51 <http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Humor/Lawyer.htm>

52 <http://jokeparty.com/>

53 <http://www.mifsudbonnici.com/lexnet/jokes/index.html>

54 <http://brainden.com/lawyer-jokes.htm>

so that they might become a scapegoat and make people stop blaming him all the time:

Satan was complaining bitterly to God, “You made the world so that it was not fair, and you made it so that most people would have to struggle every day, fight against their innate wishes and desires, and deal with all sorts of losses, grief, disasters, and catastrophes. Yet people worship and adore you. People fight, get arrested, and cheat each other, and I get blamed, even when it is not my fault. Sure, I’m evil, but give me a break. Can’t you do something to make them stop blaming me?”

And so God created lawyers.<sup>55</sup>

Quite frequently, lawyers in jokes are approached by Satan with an offer of exchange:

A lawyer was sitting in her office late one night, when Satan appeared. The Devil told the lawyer: “I have a proposition for you. You can win every case you try for the rest of your life. Your clients will adore you, your colleagues will stand in awe of you, and you will make embarrassing sums of money. All I want in exchange is your soul, your husband’s soul, your children’s souls, the souls of your parents, grandparents, and parents-in-law, and the souls of all your friends and law partners.”

The lawyer thought for a moment, then asked: “So, what’s the catch?”<sup>56</sup>

Thus, in the text above, the only thing Satan wants in exchange for his tempting proposal (such as winning all cases, clients’ adoration, colleagues’ respect, and what’s more – even making “embarrassing sums of money”) is the lawyer’s soul, as well as the souls of her family, friends and colleagues. The punchline of the joke expresses the idea underlined in a number of other

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55 <http://www.californiapersonalinjuryattorneys.us/legalhumor/index.php?m=02&y=08&d=12&entry=entry080212-194619>

56 <http://www.lectlaw.com/files/fun09.htm>

American lawyer jokes, namely, that lawyers would do anything in order to win their cases, even sell their souls (similarly to the way how prostitutes sell their bodies, Section 2.3 on lawyers and prostitutes). Furthermore, we see from the “So, what’s the catch?” that lawyers couldn’t care less about the soul; they think so little of it, that they don’t think of it as a sacrifice.

**Whatever great offer is proposed to lawyers** (as in the joke above), **they don’t normally accept it, trying to negotiate**, hoping to get even greater advantages. Even when a lawyer in the joke below is offered a seemingly fantastic deal (a blow job provided by a pretty woman without asking anything in return), he doesn’t believe the offer is good enough, and tries to raise the stakes even higher. The joke also stresses that lawyers are so insensitive, they can’t even enjoy sex, only money:

An attractive woman found herself alone in the elevator with a lawyer. “I could push this red button, get down on my knees and give you the best blow job of your life,” she purred. He thought a minute and said, “I’m sure you could – but what’s in it for me?”<sup>57</sup>

One more joke refers to a lawyer as an inveterate negotiator. The joke points out is that you can’t negotiate with a lawyer:

Q: What’s the difference between a lawyer and a terrorist?  
A: You can negotiate with a terrorist.<sup>58</sup>

Last but not least, **lawyers are hard to understand, and the language they use excludes the public**:

Q: What do you get when you cross the Godfather with a lawyer?  
A: *An offer you can’t understand.*<sup>59</sup>

Many more jokes could have been quoted on these pages.

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57 <http://www.9timezones.com/ia/law.htm>

58 <http://www.lawyer-jokes.us/modules/mylinks/viewcat.php?cid=12>

59 <http://justjoking.com/jokes/jokes/joke368.html>

## Conclusion

In this chapter the most stereotypic traits of lawyers as popularized in American lawyer jokes have been discussed and exemplified. The greatest anger and irritation in American lawyer jokes is directed at the exorbitant cost of lawsuits, the high income of lawyers, and lawyers' greed and stinginess. According to the jokes, attorneys frequently bill their clients for services they don't actually provide. Pumping more and more money out of their clients, they deliberately try to delay justice by focusing on technicalities and legal procedures. Lawyers' ignorance, skillful manipulation, corruption and dishonesty are also common themes. Since lawyers are inveterate liars, they are not to be trusted under any circumstances. They take advantage of their own clients, and they frequently take sexual advantage of them. They are pushy, arrogant, cynical and snobbish. They associate with the Devil. They deliberately use language, commonly known as legalese, which is hard to understand. Not surprisingly, in the jokes discussed, people would like to get rid of them (see our discussion of this topic in Chapter 4). Furthermore, the attorneys' sins discussed in the present chapter contribute to the existence of quite a large segment of jokes about Hell as the place lawyers go to after they die (see Chapter 5).





Illustration 1<sup>60</sup>



Illustration 2<sup>61</sup>

60 <http://www.stampboards.com/viewtopic.php?f=11&t=4852&view=next> [Retrieved May 12, 2016]

61 <http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Humor/Lawyer.htm> [Retrieved May 12, 2016]



Illustration 3<sup>62</sup>



Illustration 4<sup>63</sup>

62 <http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Humor/Lawyer.htm> [Retrieved May 12, 2016]

63 <http://www.chicagonow.com/chicagos-real-law-blog/2012/08/the-best-lawyer-joke-ever/> [Retrieved May 12, 2016]



Illustration 5<sup>64</sup>



Illustration 6<sup>65</sup>

64 <http://brainden.com/lawyer-jokes.htm> [Retrieved May 12, 2016]

65 <http://www.lawyer-jokes.mytwotails.com/my-lawyer-straightened-me-out-on-that/> [Retrieved May 12, 2016]



**"I'm 51 years old, but my lawyer is having it changed to 32."**

Illustration 7<sup>66</sup>



**"He belongs to a lawyer."**

Illustration 8<sup>67</sup>

66 <http://jokes4laugh.com/one-liner-jokes/lawyer-jokes-one-liners/> [Retrieved May 12, 2016]

67 <http://jeffkirby1.blogspot.hu/2008/06/those-lawyer-jokes-are-soooooo.html> [Retrieved March 24, 2016]



Illustration 9<sup>68</sup>



Illustration 10<sup>69</sup>

68 <http://www.stus.com/stus-category.php?cat=NOW&sub=JOK> [Retrieved May 12, 2016]

69 <http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Humor/Lawyer.htm> [Retrieved March 24, 2016]

## CHAPTER 2

### Lawyers, Doctors and Other Professionals in American Lawyer Jokes<sup>70</sup>

*There is a finite number of physicians that a population of fixed size will support. The same theory holds for teachers and engineers. However, this principle does not seem to apply to lawyers. The more you have, the more you need. (Joke)<sup>71</sup>*

#### The focus of the present chapter

There is a wide range of professions and occupations depicted in American lawyer jokes. In these jokes, lawyers are depicted alongside other professionals who, similarly to them, are also assumed to have skills based on extensive knowledge, and who also enjoy high social status, regard and esteem – for example, doctors, priests, accountants and engineers – though there are many other professions and occupations subjected to mockery in American lawyer jokes. In some jokes only a representative of one profession shows up alongside an attorney. Some other jokes, however, bring three or more professions together. Most frequently, the lawyer appears simultaneously with his eternal rival, the doctor (or physician, or other medical person such as laboratory workers, medical scientists, nurses, chiropractors, etc) – not surprising, given the fact that these two professions are considered to be two of the most preferred, prestigious and valued professions in American society.

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70 Some parts of this chapter were published in the study under the title “*Advice is cheap... except when you consult a doctor or lawyer or tax accountant*”: lawyers, doctors and representatives of other professions in American lawyer jokes (see T. Litovkina 2011c).

71 <http://www.terry.co.uk/jokes03.html>

This chapter makes an attempt to analyze stereotypical traits of lawyers compared to those of representatives of other professions and occupations, according to American lawyer jokes. In the vast majority of jokes selected for this chapter, a lawyer is accompanied by a doctor (or physician, or other medical person). The first and the longest section of the chapter treats such jokes. Jokes about prostitutes and priests, who are also frequent companions of lawyers in American lawyer jokes, are quoted and analyzed in Section 2 and Section 3. Jokes about politicians and lawyers is the theme of Section 4, while Section 5 focuses on jokes addressing people of other professions and occupations, engineers, policemen, garbage collectors, accountants, teachers, housewives among them. While in some jokes quoted and analyzed in this chapter there are only representatives of two professions and occupations (e.g., law and medicine, law and politics, law and prostitution), in some other jokes, representatives of two or more professions and occupations show up along with the lawyer (e.g., a lawyer, a doctor and a priest; or a lawyer, a doctor and an accountant).

## **Discussion**

### **2.1. “When you grow up, son, you can be whatever you want – a lawyer or a doctor”**

**Many parents want their sons to choose a career in medicine or law, which will bring them financial success (or in case of daughters, the parents hope that their offspring will marry a doctor or a lawyer, thus ensuring their high social status and financial wellbeing):**

When you grow up, son, you can be whatever you want – a lawyer or a doctor. (caption to a cartoon)<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> <http://www.lawyer-jokes.us/modules/news/index.php?storytopic=3>



These two professions are especially esteemed by Jewish parents:

Two Jewish women meet on the street, one with children. The other says, "Such beautiful children, how old are they?"

"The doctor is seven and the lawyer is five." (Dundes 1987: 124)

The joke below also expresses many parents' wish that their child should be either a doctor or a lawyer:

Children who never come when called will grow up to be doctors.  
Children who come before they are called will grow up to be lawyers.<sup>73</sup>

This joke stresses the opinion people have about doctors and lawyers: while the former are never there when one needs them (i.e. when one is sick), the latter, being pushy and arrogant, always show up before they're needed (e.g. in cases when lawyers chase ambulance cars, or just prior to an emergency landing, when they're busy passing out business cards).

What happens to a Jewish boy who can't stand the sight of blood and who stutters? Unfortunately he cannot become a lawyer, and he cannot become a doctor either. Therefore, according to the joke below, the only prestigious profession left for him is the **career of an accountant**:

What is the definition of a C.P.A. [Certified Public Accountant]?

It's a Jewish boy who can't stand the sight of blood and who stutters.  
(Dundes 1987: 124)

Lawyers are depicted as sucking people's blood (or metaphorically, **their clients' energy and spirit**, as well as **pumping them of their money**; for comparison of lawyers to other blood-sucking real and mythological beings such as ticks, leeches, or vampires, see Chapter 3). The text below touches upon the topic of the price for attorney brains. The brains are to be consumed in a cannibal restaurant, i.e. the joke has a theme of eradicating lawyers (a

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<sup>73</sup> <http://www.9timezones.com/ia/law.htm>



topic very popular in American lawyer jokes, see Chapter 4):

Stanley Livingston, in deepest Africa, finds a cannibal restaurant. The specialty of the day is brains – fried doctor brains for twenty bucks, sautéed architect brains for twenty-five bucks, and roasted attorney brains for two hundred bucks. Livingston, perplexed, asks the waiter why the attorney brains are so costly. The waiter snorts, “Do you know what a job it is to clean those suckers?”<sup>74</sup>

In the joke above, roasted attorney brains are ten times more expensive than fried doctor brains, or eight times more expensive than sautéed architect brains. What is the reason for such a glaring price difference? The answer is hidden in the punchline “Do you know what a job it is to clean those suckers?” (i.e., do you know how convoluted and dirty the minds of lawyers are?).

As it has been discussed in Chapter 1, **extorting their clients’ money and simultaneously taking sexual advantage** of them is a theme of many lawyer jokes. The following text, while playing on the two connotations of the word “screw” discussed in Chapter 1 above, brings up a parallel between a lawyer and a chiropractor:

A lawyer is standing in a long line at the box office. Suddenly, he feels a pair of hands kneading his shoulders, back, and neck. The lawyer turns around. “What the hell do you think you’re doing?” “I’m a chiropractor, and I’m just keeping in practice while I’m waiting in line.” “Well, I’m a lawyer, but you don’t see me screwing the guy in front of me, do you?”<sup>75</sup>

As we can see, contrarily to the chiropractor, the lawyer from the joke above is not trying to “keep in practice” while waiting in line and, thus, he is not screwing the guy in front of him. Two questions might arise here: Which of

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74 [http://jokes.maxabout.com/jid0003938/stanley\\_livingston\\_in\\_deepest.aspx](http://jokes.maxabout.com/jid0003938/stanley_livingston_in_deepest.aspx)

75 <http://www.iligan.gov.ph/forum/index.php?topic=384.0>

the two meanings of the word “screw” discussed above is the lawyer referring to? If he were able to do it under such circumstances, would he still resist it?

Being depicted as hungry for money, lawyers are called **thieves** in a number of jokes (as well as in the titles of some books about lawyers, e.g., “Lawyers and Thieves”, see Grutman & Thomas 1990). When the dying man from the joke below asks his physician and his lawyer to stand on both sides of his hospital bed and closes his eyes and is silent, we expect him to express his infinite gratitude to both of them. Instead, he compares himself to Jesus who “died with a thief on either side”. Thus, the joke clearly states that both the lawyer and doctor are thieves in his eyes:

A man woke up in a hospital bed and called for his doctor. He asked, “Give it to me straight. How long have I got?” The physician replied that he doubted that the man would survive the night. The man then said, “Call for my lawyer.” When the lawyer arrived, the man asked for his physician to stand on one side of the bed, while the lawyer stood on the other. The man then laid back and closed his eyes. When he remained silent for several minutes, the physician asked what he had in mind. The man replied “Jesus died with a thief on either side. I just thought I’d check out the same way.”<sup>76</sup>

Similar negative treatment of both a doctor and an attorney is found in the following joke, in which the lawyer is called a “thief”, and the doctor is called an “executioner”:

A lawyer and a physician had a dispute over precedence. They referred it to Diogenes, who cast his vote in favor of the lawyer as follows: “Let the thief go first, and the executioner follow.”<sup>77</sup>

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76 <http://www.laughterbee.com/lawyer-jokes/a-man-woke-up-in-a-hospital-bed-and-called-for-his-doct.html>

77 <http://xar.us/funny/lawyer/shortjokes.html>

The greatest anger and irritation in American lawyer jokes is directed at lawyers' **skillful manipulation, cunning and dishonesty**. Let's have a look at the following text describing the rivalry between the representatives of the two most sought after and valuable professions, the law and the medicine:

Two physicians boarded a flight out of Seattle. One sat in the window seat, the other sat in the middle seat. Just before takeoff, an attorney got on and took the aisle seat next to the two physicians. The attorney kicked off his shoes, wiggled his toes and was settling in when the physician in the window seat said, "I think I'll get up and get a Coke." "No problem," said the attorney, "I'll get it for you." While he was gone, one of the physicians picked up the attorney's shoe and spat in it. When he returned with the Coke, the other physician said, "That looks good, I think I'll have one too." Again, the attorney obligingly went to fetch it and while he was gone, the other physician picked up the other shoe and spat in it. The attorney returned and they all sat back and enjoyed the flight. As the plane was landing, the attorney slipped his feet into his shoes and knew immediately what had happened. "How long must this go on?" he asked. "This fighting between our professions? This hatred? This animosity? This spitting in shoes and urinating in Cokes?"<sup>78</sup>

In the joke above both the lawyer and the physicians are shown as cunning, resourceful, and ready to do anything in order to humiliate their rival. In fact, they are depicted as misbehaving nasty children who find pleasure in "spitting in shoes and urinating in Cokes". If it is the lawyer who apparently tries to be helpful and does the physicians a favor, the physicians, while accepting his offer, silently misbehave. And it is the lawyer who in spite of his 'kind' offer, urinates in the physicians' Cokes. It is not enough that he does so, but at the end of the joke he expresses his endless anger, irritation, and outrageousness because of the permanent fighting between the two professions. The last words of the joke show, however, that he is not a mere silent witness of this endless fighting, but an active participant in it, someone

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78 <http://www.dribbleglass.com/jokes/lawyers3.htm>

who adds fuel to the fire of “fighting”, “hatred”, and “animosity”. The joke shows that although both the lawyer and the physicians do equally nasty things, whereas the physicians don’t express any indignation, the lawyer cynically shows his anger concerning the rivalry and “spitting in shoes and urinating in Cokes”. Thus, he behaves here in the most **hypocritical way**. **His real behavior and his words juxtapose each other**, very typical behavior for lawyers in American lawyer jokes. He definitely follows the teaching of the proverb “Do as I say and not as I do,” and not the injunction to “practice what you preach”.

Being depicted greedy and good manipulators, lawyers can easily **grab their clients’ money**. Indeed, there is even a belief that attorneys put their hands in their clients’ pockets, and try to turn them out of everything. In the joke below a doctor, feeling irritated for being asked for advice at a cocktail party, consults a lawyer, his eternal rival, and asks him what he usually does in a situation like this:

A doctor and a lawyer were attending a cocktail party when the doctor was approached by a man who asked advice on how to handle his ulcer. The doctor mumbled some medical advice, then turned to the lawyer and asked, “How do you handle the situation when you are asked for advice during a social function?”

“Just send an account for such advice” replied the lawyer.

On the next morning the doctor arrived at his surgery and issued the ulcer-stricken man a \$50 account. That afternoon he received a \$100 account from the lawyer.<sup>79</sup>

What the doctor either doesn’t see (in which case he is damn stupid!) or deliberately doesn’t want to see (in which case he is cunningly tries to outwit the lawyer!) is that he does exactly the same thing he complains about – in order to get free advice he also disturbs another professional “during a social function”. There is no such thing as a free lunch, and so the doctor is punished for wanting to get free advice from the lawyer. And here again, as in many

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<sup>79</sup> <http://www.desi-jokes.com/>

other lawyer jokes discussed in the present book, one of the most dominant themes of lawyer jokes reigns: **The smart guy** (i.e. the lawyer) **wins**.

One of negative traits of lawyers is that they are highly adept at cheating their clients, for example, by **billing them for time they don't spend on their cases, or for services they don't actually provide for them**:

Three proud mothers were describing the virtues of their children. The first said, "My daughter, the surgeon, has invented a new artificial liver that has saved the lives of countless patients."

The second proudly proclaimed, "My son, the physicist, has developed a new energy source capable of heating thousands of homes with absolutely no pollution."

"That is nothing," replied the third, "my son the lawyer has discovered a new accounting system that allows him to bill clients for the time he spends on the golf course!"<sup>80</sup>

Although the lawyer's invention doesn't save anyone's life, like the doctor's, and it doesn't help to solve the energy crisis, like the physicist's, nevertheless, we understand that the mother of the lawyer has good reason to be "proud" of her son's invention: a discovery of "a new accounting system that allows him to bill clients for the time he spends on the golf course!" Similarly to the text below, the joke compares the cunning of lawyers, compared with straightforwardness and nobility of the goals of a doctor and an engineer. On the one hand, lawyers are not as sympathetic as doctors and representatives of other professions, on the other hand, we do appreciate lawyers for their inventiveness and cunning.

As we have just seen from the joke above, lawyers are seen as billing their clients for time or services they do not provide. Moreover, they can't be beaten for **making a representative of another profession do the work entrusted to them** (naturally by paying them lower fees, and, thus, making significant profits):

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80 <http://www.lawyer-jokes.us/modules/news/article.php?storyid=24>

NASA was interviewing professionals to be sent to Mars. Only one could go – and couldn't return to Earth.

The first applicant, an engineer, was asked how much he wanted to be paid for going. "A million dollars," he answered, "because I want to donate it to M.I.T."

The next applicant, a doctor, was asked the same question. He asked for \$2 million. "I want to give a million to my family," he explained, "and leave the other million for the advancement of medical research."

The last applicant was a lawyer. When asked how much money he wanted, he whispered in the interviewer's ear, "Three million dollars." "Why so much more than the others?" asked the interviewer.

The lawyer replied, "If you give me \$3 million, I'll give you \$1 million, I'll keep \$1 million, and we'll send the engineer to Mars."<sup>81</sup>

In the joke above, the lawyer "whispered in the interviewer's ear". By doing this he was willing to show his interviewer that he was ready to do anything to satisfy his financial needs in case he got the job. The fact that the lawyer was whispering naturally shows that he understands that this is a prohibited kind of proposition. Although the lawyer's \$3 million is higher than the \$1 million or \$2 million of the engineer or doctor, by accepting the lawyer's application, the interviewer might profit himself, i.e. the lawyer is depicted as a clever **notorious negotiator who thinks that, similarly to himself, everyone is willing to be dishonest and can be corrupted**, provided the price is right. And just in vein with the "Every man has his price", the lawyer assumes the price of his interviewer is \$1 million.

Some of the most stereotypical traits of the legal profession – **skillful ability to manipulate and persuade**, as well as **cunning and slyness** – contrasted to the gullibility, naiveté and even stupidity of a doctor are reflected in the following joke:

A doctor and a lawyer got into a car accident on a small country road. The lawyer had figured that nobody else would be on the road, and

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81 <http://www.lawyer-jokes.us/modules/news/article.php?storyid=29>

had raced through a stop sign. The doctor, on a cross street, had no time to react and couldn't have missed the lawyer if he had tried. Fortunately, neither driver was hurt.

The lawyer, seeing that the doctor was a little shaken up, helped him from his battered car and offered him a drink from a hip flask. The doctor accepted, took a deep drink, and handed the flask back to the lawyer. The lawyer held the flask for a minute or two, and gave it to the doctor again. The doctor took another swig. He again returned the flask to the lawyer, who closed it and put it away.

"Aren't you going to have a drink yourself?" asked the doctor.

"Not now," answered the lawyer. "I'll have something after the police leave."<sup>82</sup>

The gullible doctor accepts a swig of alcohol from the lawyer's flask without suspecting that the lawyer has made his "hospitable" offer on purpose, so that the doctor should be accused by the police – who are just about to arrive – for driving under the influence of alcohol, and thus would be held responsible for the accident. As in so many other American lawyer jokes, this one also warns that **lawyers should never be trusted**.

One of the most basic stereotypes of the legal profession, according to American lawyer jokes (see Chapter 1 above), is connected with **lying and dishonesty**. Let's illustrate this with the joke below, which is set on the Riviera, where a doctor and a lawyer are spending their vacation:

A doctor vacationing on the Riviera met an old lawyer friend and asked him what he was doing there. The lawyer replied, "Remember that lousy real estate I bought? Well, it caught fire, so here I am with the fire insurance proceeds. What are you doing here?"

The doctor replied, "Remember that lousy real estate I had in Mississippi? Well, the river overflowed, and here I am with the flood insurance proceeds." The lawyer looked puzzled. "Gee," he asked, "how did you start the flood?"<sup>83</sup>

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82 <http://www.lawlaughs.com/accidents/accident.html>

83 <http://www.topfool.com/lawyerjokes.html>

As the doctor discovers, his old lawyer friend is vacationing there because his fire insurance has paid for the loss of his real estate in fire. When the doctor says that he is there with his flood insurance proceeds, the lawyer can't hide his surprise and bemusement from the doctor, and looks extremely "puzzled". The punchline of the joke ("how did you start the flood?") is a clear indication that it was the "smart" lawyer who had started the fire in order to get the fire insurance money. And since dishonesty is second nature to him, he takes it for granted that other people (including the doctor) think and act alike. The punchline is also an expression of the lawyer's entire appreciation of the trick played by the doctor; thus, the lawyer takes it for granted that the doctor is also corrupt. More than that, the lawyer is even willing to know all the technicalities so that next time he might "start a flood" himself.

Earlier in the chapter, a joke was discussed in which a doctor asked a lawyer for a piece of advice during a social function. The lawyer outwitted the doctor in that joke. Naturally, it is not only a doctor who might need a lawyer's advice. Tables might be turned: a lawyer, when he is sick, might also need a doctor's help. And whenever doctors can, they try to take revenge with the principle of "tit for tat" (see a number of jokes in the present chapter, in particular, the last four). In spite of the fact that the vast majority of American lawyer jokes, while having a "smart guy wins" theme, stress lawyers' cleverness, intelligence, and cunning (dominant traits lawyers are needed for), the sarcastic answer of the doctor from the joke below suggests quite the opposite, i.e., that some lawyers might be quite **stupid**,<sup>84</sup> even though stupidity is not one of their stereotypical features:

A lawyer finds out he has a brain tumor, and it's inoperable – in fact, it's so large, they have to do a brain transplant. His doctor gives him a choice of available brains – there's a jar of rocket scientist brains for \$10 an ounce, a jar of regular scientist brains for \$15 an ounce, and a jar of lawyer brains for the princely sum of \$800 an ounce. The outraged lawyer says, "This is a rip-off – how come the lawyer brains

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<sup>84</sup> Stupidity, ignorance and lack of thinking are stereotypical features of politicians according to a number of recent political jokes discussed in Chapter 7.



are so damned expensive?” The doctor replies, “Do you know how many lawyers it takes to get an ounce of brains?”<sup>85</sup>

The joke above also points out that scientists, in the doctor’s opinion, are much smarter than lawyers. As we learn from the text, the exceptionally high price for lawyer brains is due to the fact that it’s an extremely time-consuming task to find lawyers who have brains at all. And the numbers (10 and 15, as opposed to 800) talk for themselves. If, however, we pay attention to the fact that the punchline of the joke is a sarcastic remark made by a doctor, the lawyer’s arch rival in American lawyer jokes, we are not surprised. Still, let us note that in the vast majority of jokes in which a lawyer appears alongside a doctor, it’s the lawyer who outwits the doctor, and not the other way around.

The popular opinion that **lawyers overcomplicate things and do unnecessary things**, creating “chaos and confusion”, is reflected in the following joke:

A physician, an engineer, and an attorney were discussing who among them belonged to the oldest of the three professions represented. The physician said, “Remember that, on the sixth day, God took a rib from Adam and fashioned Eve, making him the first surgeon. Therefore, medicine is the oldest profession.” The engineer replied, “But, before that, God created the heavens and earth from chaos and confusion, and thus he was the first engineer. Therefore, engineering is an older profession than medicine.” Then, the lawyer spoke up, “Yes, but who do you think created all of the chaos and confusion?”<sup>86</sup>

As we know from a number of jokes, a lawyer will do anything in order to get potential new clients with the pushiness and arrogance typical of his profession. Regardless of circumstances, whether it’s immediately after a car accident, or during an emergency landing which might lead to a fatal

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85 [http://www.101funjokes.com/lawyer\\_joke\\_2.htm](http://www.101funjokes.com/lawyer_joke_2.htm)

86 <http://www.terry.co.uk/jokes02.html>

catastrophe, attorneys try to pass out their business cards, in the hope of making money on mischief, tragedy, and death. Not surprisingly, as we have already discussed in Chapter 1, such pushy and arrogant lawyers, in their eagerness to hook themselves new cases, might end up smashing their car into an ambulance while they tailgate.

The joke below refers to the lawyer being too eager to net in a new client and so he drives too close behind the ambulance and when it stops (maybe deliberately???), he crashes into it:

Did you hear about the lawyer hurt in an accident?  
An ambulance stopped suddenly.<sup>87</sup>

The joke above is also a clear manifestation of the retaliation of doctors (as well as the personal working in ambulance cars, nurses, or scientists, and laboratory workers involved in medical experiments). One of the reasons for such revenge might be the fact that in American society, doctors are nowadays frequently sued by attorneys for malpractice.

Very frequently, however, the doctors' revenge is merely verbal, as in the question-answer joke below:

Q: "Doctor, is it possible to get pregnant from anal sex?"  
A: "Sure – where do you think attorneys come from?"<sup>88</sup>

It's not only the doctor who is asked the question if one can "get pregnant from anal sex", but a mother of a teenage girl. Clearly, such texts as the one below suggest it's not only doctors who dislike lawyers:

An anxious 15 year old girl comes home from school.  
Mum, she asks tentatively, can you get pregnant from anal sex?

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87 [http://www.x-stuff.org/jokes.php?joke=Did\\_you\\_hear\\_about\\_the\\_lawyer\\_hurt\\_in\\_an\\_accident](http://www.x-stuff.org/jokes.php?joke=Did_you_hear_about_the_lawyer_hurt_in_an_accident)

88 <http://www.9timezones.com/ia/lawques.htm>

Don't be silly, of course you can, replies her mother, where do you think lawyers come from?<sup>89</sup>

The body part from which “attorneys come from” is an *asshole* (implicitly referred to). The next text, while explicitly mentioning the same body part, also contains a highly offensive remark made by a doctor about lawyers; what's more, it also compares lawyers' assholes to their lips:

Three doctors were standing around and started talking about which patients were the easiest to operate on. The first doctor says Germans, because everything inside is neat and orderly and always in its place.” The second doctor said “Japanese patients, because you open them up and all there is is a circuit board to interchange.” “No! No! You're both wrong”, said the third doctor, “Lawyers are the easiest to operate on. They're gutless. The only organs they have are lips and assholes..... and those are interchangeable!”<sup>90</sup>

In this section a number of jokes have been exemplified and analyzed in which not only lawyers, but their rivals, the doctors, are also the butt of the joke. The following two sections will make an attempt to analyze texts in which lawyers show up together with whores and priests.

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89 <http://www.gigaflop.demon.co.uk/humour/lawyer.htm>

90 <http://www.jokes4us.com/peoplejokes/lawyerjokes/threedoctorsjoke.html>

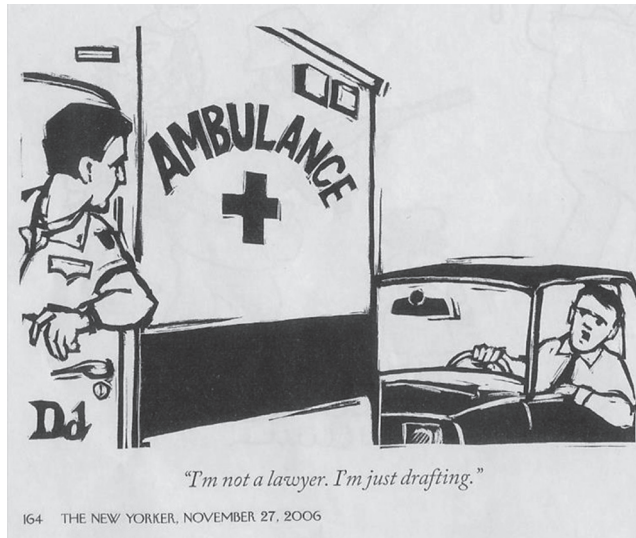


Illustration 11<sup>91</sup>



Illustration 12<sup>92</sup>

91 <http://www.marlerblog.com/uploads/image/ambulance-chaser.jpg> [Retrieved May 12, 2016]

92 <http://askaboutworkerscompgravytrains.com/tag/lawyer-jokes/> [Retrieved March 24,

## 2.2. Lawyers and Prostitutes

Many American lawyer jokes draw **parallels between the law and prostitution**. Prostitution, found in almost all civilizations on Earth, is often referred to as the “world’s oldest profession” (Keegan 1974) and is generally defined as “the exchanging money for sexual services” (see Shaver 2011).

If we check Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary for the meanings of the noun “prostitute”, we will see the following two meanings: “a woman who engages in promiscuous sexual intercourse for pay; whore; harlot”; as well as “a person, as a writer, artist, etc., who sells his services for low or unworthy purposes” (Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary 1983: 1446).

*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* gives the following definition of “prostitute”:

- 1 a: a woman who engages in promiscuous sexual intercourse especially for money; WHORE b: a male who engages in sexual and especially homosexual practices for money
- 2: a person (as a writer or painter) who deliberately debases his or her talents (as for money).<sup>93</sup>

In *Wiktionary* we can find the following meaning of the word:

1. A person who performs sexual activity for payment
2. A person who is perceived as engaging in sexual activity with many people.
3. A person who does, or offers to do, an activity for money, despite personal dislike or dishonour.<sup>94</sup>

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2016]

93 [http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/prostitute\[3\]](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/prostitute[3]) (Retrieved June 1, 2009)

94 <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/prostitute> (Retrieved June 1, 2009)

The career of a prostitute and a lawyer share similar features. On the other hand, while prostitutes sell their bodies, lawyers sell their souls (one such joke, in which a lawyer is propositioned by Satan, was discussed in Chapter 1). Despite the fact that in different countries, at different times, attitudes towards both prostitution and prostitutes have changed, nowadays prostitution is considered to be a dishonorable profession, and a crime against morality (Scambler 1997: 7). Stereotypically, women who sell sex for money are seen as trash. And what about lawyers, who sell their principles and betray their calling, knowledge and ethics? Not surprisingly, according to our material, the legal profession, the services lawyers provide, their professional ethics as well as their exorbitant fees, cast them in a far less favorable light than prostitutes. They are the object of more scorn. In this vein, Fred Rodell, in his *Woe Unto You, Lawyers!* (1939: 226), writes: “The fact that The Law is constantly for sale, and generally to the highest bidder, ties right into the fact that The Law as a whole is a fraud.”

In the following joke, Angela, who has become a lawyer, would rather have her mother think that she is still a prostitute, which in her eyes is preferable to the shameful career of a lawyer:

After years of hard work, Angie took her first vacation on a luxury cruise ship. While sitting in a deck chair, she recognized a former high school classmate, a long-lost friend from her old hometown.

She crossed the deck and shook hands with her friend and said: “Hello, Angela. I haven’t seen you in years. What are you doing these days?”

“I’m practicing law,” whispered Angela. “But don’t tell my mother. She still thinks I’m a prostitute.”<sup>95</sup>

It is not only morally more expedient for the lawyer-daughter in the joke above to have her mother think that she is a prostitute (and not a lawyer!), but as the following text suggest, it is also more expedient for a lawyer-father to define his work to his seven-year-old son in terms of prostitution:

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95 <http://in.answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20081220000610AA8M1Td>

A grade school teacher was asking students what their parents did for a living. "Tim, you be first," she said. "What does your mother do all day?" Tim stood up and proudly said, "She's a doctor."

"That's wonderful. How about you, Amie?"

Amie shyly stood up, scuffed her feet and said, "My father is a mailman." "Thank you, Amie," said the teacher. "What about your father, Billy?" Billy proudly stood up and announced, "My daddy plays piano in a whorehouse."

The teacher was aghast and promptly changed the subject to geography. Later that day she went to Billy's house and rang the bell. Billy's father answered the door. The teacher explained what his son had said and demanded an explanation.

Billy's father said, "I'm actually an attorney. How can I explain a thing like that to a seven-year-old?"<sup>96</sup>

According to Billy's father, being a lawyer is so shameful, that he would rather have his son think he works in a whorehouse. Both the jokes quoted above, while comparing the two professions, emphasize that it is much easier to admit being a prostitute than being a lawyer.

The following texts, on the other hand, draw up a parallel between the two professions:

A lawyer is an expert on justice in the same way a prostitute is an expert on love.<sup>97</sup>

What's the other difference between a lawyer and a prostitute?  
Clothes.<sup>98</sup>

In quite a number of other jokes that set up a parallel between lawyers and prostitutes, the word "screw" is used for punning purposes. As we can

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96 <http://www.jokesandhumor.com/jokes/229.html>

97 <http://www.vakilno1.com/lawonliner.htm>

98 <http://www.hartfelt.net/fun/humor/humor1.html>

see from the three texts below, the two different connotations of the word “screw”, which have already been discussed above, in Chapter 1 (“to extort or practice extortion on; as, he *screwed* me out of money. [Slang.]”, as opposed to “have[ing] sexual intercourse with. [Slang.]” (Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary 1983: 1629), are played upon again:

Q: What’s the difference between a prostitute and an attorney?

A: Both of them screw you, but the attorney gets paid twice as much to do it.<sup>99</sup>

What’s the difference between a lawyer and a prostitute?

A prostitute will stop screwing you when you’re dead.<sup>100</sup>

By way of an aside, many jokes bring up similar parallels, with the tick, a parasite which lives on blood (for more, see Chapter 3 of this book).

Although, when a gender is not specified, a prostitute is commonly assumed to be a female, gigolos (male prostitutes) sometimes show up in our material as well:

Q: What’s the difference between a lawyer and a gigolo?

A: A gigolo only screws one person at a time.<sup>101</sup>

### 2.3. Lawyers and Priests

Another frequently lampooned profession in American lawyer jokes is that of the **priesthood** (including other members of clergy such as Evangelists, and even the Pope). This is not as surprising as it may at first appear. While the status and power of the priesthood has declined through the years, the status and power of the legal profession has risen. The title of the book by

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99 <http://www.9timezones.com/ia/lawques.htm>

100 <http://www.hartfelt.net/fun/humor/humor1.html>

101 [http://www.lawsongs.com/lawyer\\_jokes.html](http://www.lawsongs.com/lawyer_jokes.html)



Gawalt “The New High Priest: Lawyers in Post-Civil War America” (1984) suggests such changes, just as the following pronouncement: “In tribal times, there were the medicine-men. In the Middle Ages, there were the priests. Today there are the lawyers” (Rodell 1939: 3).

We will quote and examine in this section only three texts (a number of other jokes treating lawyers and priests, or other members of the clergy can be found in different chapters, e.g. Chapter 5 about the place where lawyers go after they die).

The persons of the following joke are a **priest**, a **doctor** and a **lawyer**, representatives of professions most frequently needed when someone is dying:

An elderly man, 82, just returned from the doctors only to find he didn't have long to live. So he summoned the three most important people in his life to tell them of his fate.

1. His Doctor
2. His Priest
3. His Lawyer

Well, today I found out I don't have long to live. So I have summoned you three here, because you are the most important people in my life, and I need to ask a favor. Today, I am going to give each of you an envelope with \$50,000 dollars inside.

When I die, I would ask that all three of you throw the money into my grave. After the man passed on, the three people happened to run into each other. The doctor said, “I have to admit I kept \$10,000 dollars of his money, he owed me on lots of medical bills. But, I threw the other \$40,000 in like he requested.”

The Priest said, “I have to admit also, I kept \$25,000 dollars for the church. It's all going to a good cause. I did, however, throw the other \$25,000 in the grave.”

Well the Lawyer just couldn't believe what he was hearing! "I am surprised at you two taking advantage of him like that! I wrote a check for the full amount and threw it all in!"<sup>102</sup>

Naturally, the 82 year-old dying man entrusting three envelopes with \$50,000 dollars each to the lawyer, doctor and priest just so they'd throw the money into his grave, seems ludicrous. As we know from folk wisdom, "There is no fool like an old fool". Maybe he thought when inviting all three of them at the same time that being each other's witnesses, they would be ashamed to steal his money after his death? How could he expect them, and in particular, the lawyer, a notorious 'money grabber', to obey his last will? And what could stand in their way once he was dead? Naturally, nothing. And here all the three show their 'best' [sic] qualities as far as their trustfulness, honesty and reliability are concerned. Thus, all three of them behave in vein with the two jokes above in which lawyers were called thieves who steal the money entrusted to their care. Although none of the three most important people in the deceased man's life obeyed his last wish, while the doctor kept only one fifth of the entrusted money (the money he had owed him!), the priest kept half of the money for the church (and nothing for himself!), the lawyer kept the whole amount of money given to him. Again, in this joke the lawyer outsmarts the representatives of the other professions. But in spite of the fact that he kept all the money, he expresses hypocritical words of indignation and talks about the other two taking advantage of the deceased man. Thus, this joke, similarly to the one about "spitting in shoes and pissing in Cokes", is also a clear commentary on the hypocrisy of lawyers. In the world of this lawyer, his noble words go against his real deeds.

Let us view here two other jokes in which priests show up alongside lawyers as well as representatives of other professions. The priests are very different in the following two texts. While the priest in the first joke is shown as a likeable, grateful person, the priest in the second text is ready to kill and kills people whom he doesn't like, i.e., lawyers.

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102 [http://www.jokesaboutdoctors.com/doctor\\_joke\\_sixteen.html](http://www.jokesaboutdoctors.com/doctor_joke_sixteen.html)

The first text is set up at a barber's shop:

A barber gave a haircut to a priest one day. The priest tried to pay for the haircut, but the barber refused, saying, "You do God's work." The next morning the barber found a dozen bibles at the door to his shop. A policeman came to the barber for a haircut, and again the barber refused payment, saying, "You protect the public." The next morning the barber found a dozen doughnuts at the door to his shop.

A lawyer came to the barber for a haircut, and again the barber refused payment, saying, "You serve the justice system." The next morning the barber found a dozen lawyers waiting for a free haircut.<sup>103</sup>

The **barber** is generous and gives representatives of different professions (a **priest**, a **policeman**, and eventually, a **lawyer**) free haircuts. How do they behave afterwards? How does each of them express his gratitude? While the priest, in vein with a proverb *One good turn deserves another*, brings him a dozen bibles as a sign of appreciation and gratitude for the barber's free haircut and, similarly, a policeman thanks the barber with a dozen doughnuts, the lawyer sends the barber a dozen customers. At first one might think what a generous and thoughtful gesture from the lawyer! If we didn't know that the lawyer has had a free haircut, we would think that he was trying to help the barber to earn more money by sending him new customers. In the context of the joke, however, we understand that these are clients who, similarly to the stingy lawyer, are expecting to have "a free haircut".

In our next and the last joke in this section, a **priest** is given a lift by a **truck driver**:

A truck driver would amuse himself by running over lawyers. Whenever he saw a lawyer walking down the side of the road he would swerve to hit him, enjoy the loud, satisfying "THUMP", and then swerve back onto the road.

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103 <http://www.lawyer-jokes.us/modules/news/article.php?storyid=19>

(At this point some of you are probably wondering how the trucker could distinguish the lawyers from the humans. Obviously, he saw the trail of slime they left!)

One day, as the truck driver was driving along, he saw a priest hitchhiking. He thought he would do a good turn and pulled the truck over.

He asked the priest, "Where are you going, Father?"

"I'm going to the church five miles down the road," replied the priest.

"No problem, Father! I'll give you a lift. Climb in the truck." The happy priest climbed onto the passenger seat and the truck driver continued down the road.

Suddenly the truck driver saw a lawyer walking down the road and instinctively he swerved to hit him. But then he remembered there was a priest in the truck with him, so at the last minute he swerved back away, narrowly missing the lawyer. However even though he was certain he missed the lawyer, he still heard a loud "THUD". Not understanding where the noise came from he glanced in his mirrors and when he didn't see anything, he turned to the priest and said, "I'm sorry Father. I almost hit that lawyer."

"That's okay", replied the priest. "I got him with the door!"<sup>104</sup>

As we see in the text above, both the truck driver and the priest hate lawyers, but at the beginning of the joke they don't know about each other's hatred. The words "instinctively he swerved to hit him" show that it's the truck driver's habit to hit lawyers walking down the road. The joke even explains how he is able to "distinguish the lawyers from the humans", by seeing "the trail of slime they left", although the phenomenon of a lawyer who walks down the road rather than driving his BMW or Lexus might be quite rare. After almost having hit the lawyer, the driver suddenly remembered that he was not alone in the truck, and that there would be a witness of his crime, the priest. At the last minute, refraining from hitting the lawyer and swerving away, the driver only narrowly missed him. He says that he's sorry that he "almost hit the lawyer." Sadness in the driver's voice can be

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104 [http://www.101funjokes.com/lawyer\\_jokes.htm](http://www.101funjokes.com/lawyer_jokes.htm)

interpreted twofold: as the expression of his guilt and regret regarding his sinful intentions to kill the lawyer, or as his regret that he hasn't managed to hit the lawyer. The priest presumes that the driver is sad because he hasn't managed to hit the lawyer. This is why he calms the driver by stating, "I got him with the door!" and indicating that he shouldn't feel any sorrow about his failure, the task has been completed. One of the most striking things in the joke is that the person who got the lawyer "with the door" was the person who in our minds should be guided by the biblical commands, "Thou shall not kill!" and "Love thy neighbor as yourself!"

## 2.4. Lawyers and politicians

Let me start my discussion in this section by quoting two jokes pairing a lawyer with a **politician**. The first joke, given as a motto to my book, stresses the uselessness of the representatives of both occupations:

What's the strongest argument against both theories of origin?  
Politicians and lawyers. Who in their right mind would create (or evolve into) these species?<sup>105</sup>

Our next joke addresses the corruptness and dishonesty of politicians and lawyers:

Q: What do you get when you cross a crooked politician with a crooked lawyer?  
A: Chelsea Clinton.<sup>106</sup>

It has to be pointed out at here that very few American lawyer jokes have been found in which lawyers appear together with politicians. The reason for this phenomenon might be explained by the simple fact that in the U.S. lawyers dominate the political arena. So why have both occupations in one joke, if

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105 <http://jokeparty.com/>

106 [http://www.answerbag.com/q\\_view/307855](http://www.answerbag.com/q_view/307855)

so frequently politicians are lawyers? Thus, in the article entitled “There was a lawyer, an engineer and a politician... Why do professional paths to the top vary so much,” published in “The Economist” (see “The Economist”, Apr 16th 2009) we can read about research which was published in the reference book “International Who’s Who”, the purpose of which was to find out what professions and occupations are well represented in politics worldwide, and to examine the reasons for such representation. A sample of almost 5,000 politicians was trawled through in that research. It was discovered that the first most common profession worldwide is that of a lawyer, the second one is that of a businessman. As “The Economist” has stressed:

In democracies, lawyers dominate. This is not surprising. The law deals with the same sort of questions as politics: what makes a just society; the balance between liberty and security, and so on. Lawyerly skills—marshalling evidence, appealing to juries, command of procedure—transfer well to the political stage. So, sadly, does an obsession with process and a tendency to see things in partisan terms—us or them, guilty or not guilty—albeit in a spirit of loyalty to a system to which all defer. In common-law countries, the battleground of the court is of a piece with the adversarial, yet rule-bound, spirit of politics. (see “The Economist”, Apr 16th 2009)

Indeed, the profession of lawyer is the most common profession among US politicians. Thus, more than half of U.S. Presidents have practiced law before becoming president and entering the White House: to name just a few, the president Barack Obama, as well as Bill Clinton, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Calvin Coolidge, Woodrow Wilson, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln (for more, see “The Economist”, Apr 16th 2009; Shiner 2015; Li 2008). In both the recent House and Congress lawyers dominate. As it was pointed out early in 2015, “Of House members, 37 percent — 160 people — will be lawyers in 2015. So will 53 percent of senators” (see Shiner 2015). The situation was similar in the second half of the XX century as well:

All the extravagance and incompetence of our present Government is due, in the main, to lawyers and, in part at least, to good ones. They are responsible for nine-tenths of the useless and vicious laws that now clutter the statute-books, and for all the evils that go with the vain attempt to enforce them. Every Federal judge is a lawyer. So are most Congressmen. Every invasion of the plain rights of the citizen has a lawyer behind it. (Mencken, quoted in Rodger 1991: 286)

Roddy Stinson pointed out in this regard: “If all the lawyers were removed from Congress, the nation’s Gross National Product could gain more than \$600 billion after 10 years” (Stinson 1992: 2A).

A number of reasons for lawyers’ dominance in politics are stressed by “The Economist”: Let us quote here just a few:

A lawyer’s job is to argue a position on behalf of his client. In many cases, a lawyer is arguing passionately for what he or she believes in. In a sense, this is also what a politician does. They take a stand on where they feel changes need to be made and argue with their fellow politicians to try and bring about these changes. (...)

Lawyers are usually highly skilled at presenting a reasoned argument in favor of their cause. Debating and public speaking are skills that all politicians need, since they are required to spend a lot of their time in the firing line, being grilled by their fellow politicians or the media. Lawyers are cool-headed and capable of remaining calm under pressure. It is part of the job, particularly when a criminal defense lawyer is in a courtroom scenario, so the cut and thrust of the political arena usually represents no great problem to them. (...)

Politicians can also be a slippery bunch at times, especially when they have something unpalatable to slide past the electorate, or worse, a skeleton on the closet to hide. One thing lawyers excel at is a poker face. They can’t afford to put their emotions on show, especially when

defending someone they might not feel sympathy for, so they make great politicians when things are going pear-shaped. (see 'There was a lawyer, an engineer and a politician...' "The Economist", Apr 16th 2009)

Therefore, it should not be surprising to discover a number of similar, or even identical jokes about politicians and lawyers. Let us have a look at the following two sets of jokes, in both of which lying is mocked as one of the most basic stereotypical traits of both lawyers and politicians (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 7).

In the first set of jokes (the jokes are also cited in Chapter 1 and Chapter 7), all the words are identical, only the name of the occupation ("lawyer") is exchanged (for "politician"):

How can you tell when a lawyer is lying? His lips are moving.<sup>107</sup>

How can you tell when a politician is lying? His lips are moving.<sup>108</sup>

In the second set, besides substituting the word "attorneys" for "politicians", a few more words are added into the context of the joke. In both the jokes a bus load of lawyers (or politicians) runs off the road and crashes into a tree, causing the death of many lawyers (or politicians). Moreover, the lawyers (or politicians) who were not killed in the crash are buried alive:

A bus load of attorneys were driving down a country road when all of a sudden the bus ran off the road and crashed into a tree in an old farmer's field. The old farmer, after seeing what happened, went over to investigate. He then proceeded to dig a hole and bury the attorneys. A few days later, the local sheriff came out, saw the crashed bus, and then asked the old farmer, "Were they all dead?"

The old farmer replied, "Well, some of them said they weren't, but you know how them attorneys lie."<sup>109</sup>

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107 [http://wiki.answers.com/Q/How\\_can\\_you\\_tell\\_when\\_a\\_lawyer\\_is\\_lying](http://wiki.answers.com/Q/How_can_you_tell_when_a_lawyer_is_lying)

108 <http://www.craziestjokes.com/funny-political-jokes.html>

109 <http://www.101funjokes.com/attorney-jokes.htm>



A bus load of politicians were driving down a country road, when all of a sudden, the bus ran off the road and crashed into a tree in an old farmer's field. The old farmer, after seeing what happened, went over to investigate. He then proceeded to dig a hole and bury the politicians. A few days later, the local sheriff came out, saw the crashed bus, and asked the farmer where all the politicians had gone. The old farmer said he had buried them. The sheriff then asked the old farmer, "Were they ALL dead?" The old farmer replied, "Well, some of them said they weren't, but you know how them politicians lie."<sup>110</sup>

Besides containing a clear anti-lawyer (or anti-politician) sentiment and hostility towards attorneys (or politicians) (what can be more cruel and inhuman than burying someone alive?), the jokes also stress the idea that all lawyers (or politicians) are inveterate liars and should not be believed or trusted under any circumstances.

As it has been emphasized above, lawyers constitute the most representative profession U.S. politics. Li wrote in this regard: "Lawyers help enforce and apply laws, while politicians write them" (see Li 2008). Li also pointed out a number of "drawbacks to having lawyers dominate politics". Let me quote them:

Lawyers and politicians are two of the most hated and least trusted groups of people, as the large number of jokes at their expense will attest, and this may be at the root of some of the public cynicism towards politics in North America and elsewhere. Although ethical conduct is considered central to both professions, they both seem to exhibit a higher than normal rate of professional misconduct and breach of trust, in the public perception if not in reality. For many lawyers and politicians, the point is to win at all costs – in trying to win on behalf of their client, or in trying to get elected, they often

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110 <http://www.jokebuddha.com/Politicians/recent/3>

seem to push aside their convictions or sense of right and wrong in favour of expediency. Much of the vitriol directed at lawyers and politicians is directed at their rhetorical flair – they are good at selling things and telling people what they want to hear, skills that are also shared by that other most-hated profession, the used-car salesman. (see Li 2008)

Dozens of other jokes about politicians exist that have almost the same wording as the jokes about lawyers quoted in this book.

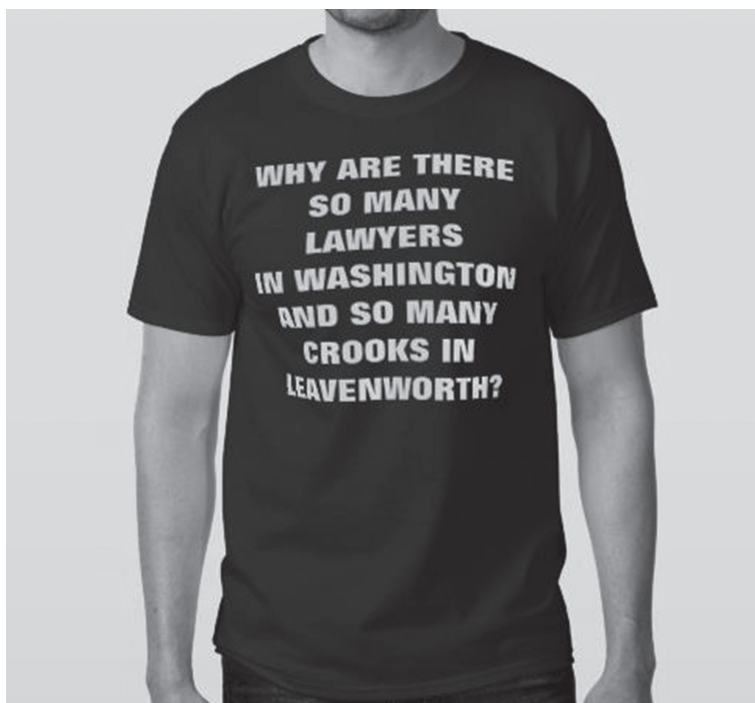


Illustration 13<sup>111</sup>

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111 [http://www.zazzle.com/why\\_are\\_there\\_so\\_many\\_t\\_shirt-235007423023473966](http://www.zazzle.com/why_are_there_so_many_t_shirt-235007423023473966)  
[Retrieved May 25, 2016]



Illustration 14<sup>112</sup>

## 2.5. Lawyers and Representatives of Other Professions

In the previous four sections we have analyzed the stereotypical traits of lawyers compared to those of doctors, whores, priests, and politicians as presented in American jokes. There are many other professions and occupations subjected to mockery, e.g., accounting, engineering, teaching, barbering, plumbing, secretarial work, farming, garbage collecting, and so on. Let us treat some of these texts in this section.

The joke below shows extreme scorn toward both the profession of a **lawyer** and an **agent responsible for tax collection and tax law enforcement**:

If a lawyer and an IRS<sup>113</sup> agent were both drowning, and you could only save one of them, would you go to lunch or read the paper?<sup>114</sup>

Lawyers are occasionally paired with all sorts of service technicians whose occupations do not require much theoretical knowledge and who do not enjoy a high status and prestige in American society (e.g., **telephone technicians, plumbers, janitors, secretaries and farmers**).

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112 <http://www.lexplusultra.com/LawyerJokes.htm> [Retrieved March 24, 2016]

113 International Revenue Service (IRS) is the United States government agency responsible for tax collection and tax law enforcement.

114 [http://jokes.smashits.com/view-6697-if\\_a\\_lawyer\\_and\\_an\\_irs\\_agent\\_were\\_both\\_drowning\\_an.html](http://jokes.smashits.com/view-6697-if_a_lawyer_and_an_irs_agent_were_both_drowning_an.html)

The joke below suggests the stereotypic traits of stinginess and money-grubbing characteristic of lawyers:

The plumber presented his customer, a lawyer, with a bill charging rates of \$500 an hour. The lawyer was outraged, saying “I don’t even make that kind of money - doesn’t that seem a bit steep?” The plumber replied, “That’s what I thought, when I was a lawyer.”<sup>115</sup>

The joke is aimed at the fact that lawyers charge a lot, but hate to have to part with their money. What lawyers charge they think is only fair, what others (**plumbers**) charge them they think is indecently high. The point of the joke is that the plumber – for the sake of the humor – is saying that lawyers are cheap and mean, they don’t want to pay others properly; he, better than anyone else, should know.

As we have already shown in Chapter 1, in many American lawyer jokes lawyers are stereotypically shown as greedy, hungry for money, and big liars. Moreover, they are also ready to falsify reality and lie in court in order to help their clients to win their cases. But more than that, attorneys deceive their own clients. One of the easiest ways clients might be deceived is through billing them for a service which hasn’t been provided, or for the time which hasn’t been spent on them. The following joke, one of the light bulb cycle jokes about lawyers, enlarges to grotesqueness lawyers’ skillfulness in billing their clients for a service which hasn’t been rendered; moreover, they make the representative of another profession or occupation (e.g., a **janitor**, a **secretary**, or a **messenger**) do the work entrusted to them (naturally by paying them lower fees):

*Light Bill*

Q: How many lawyers does it take to change a lightbulb?

A: None, he’ll have the janitor do it. But, you’ll get the following bill:

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115 <http://www.9timezones.com/ia/law.htm>

<i>Item</i>	<i>Charge</i>	<i>(What it really means)</i>
Lawyer's time, (1 hr. Min.)	\$400	You sucker.
Connectivity charge	\$100	He called janitor.
Staff charges	\$250	The secretary prepared. bill.
Research fees	\$422	BMW payment due.
Consulting fees	\$431	Senior partner's BMW bill.
Specialized equipment	\$122	Bought bulb.
Delivery expenses	\$34	Had messenger deliver. it.
Rule 453.957(B)(1) charge	\$394	Second partner Volvo bill. <sup>116</sup>

“Service” professions, i.e. those providing services to customers, also show up in American lawyer jokes. Quite often **lawyers** appear in jokes together with **bar tenders** and **owners of small business** (e.g., shops, restaurants). The following joke stresses attorneys’ unbounded greediness combined with cunning through the clever “misinterpretation” of the words of the **owner of the restaurant**. Exchanging sandwiches, the lawyers solve the problem, with a very favorable outcome for themselves, of course:

Two lawyers entered the diner and ordered a couple of drinks. They then took sandwiches from their briefcases and began to eat. Seeing this, the angry owner went over to them and said, “Excuse me, but you cannot eat your own sandwiches in here!” Shrugging their shoulders the lawyers exchanged sandwiches.<sup>117</sup>

Similarly to the joke discussed earlier, in which both the doctor and lawyer meet “during a social function”, the joke below clearly shows us that a lawyer can outwit anyone, and naturally, his neighbor, the **butcher** is no exception. In fact, as they say in America, “Good lawyer, bad neighbor”:

A dog ran into a butcher shop and grabbed a roast off the counter. Fortunately, the butcher recognized the dog as belonging to a neighbor of his. The neighbor happened to be a lawyer.

<sup>116</sup> <http://www.jamesfuqua.com/lawyers/jokes/lightbulb.html>

<sup>117</sup> <http://www.broadcaster.org.uk/section2/jokes/lawyerjokes.html>

Incensed at the theft, the butcher called up his neighbor and said, “Hey, if your dog stole a roast from my butcher shop, would you be liable for the cost of the meat?”

The lawyer replied, “Of course, how much was the roast?”

“\$7.98.” said the butcher.

A few days later the butcher received a check in the mail for \$7.98. Attached to it was an invoice that read: Legal Consultation Service: \$150.<sup>118</sup>

Although the vast majority of jokes treating the death of lawyers sarcastically show that after their death lawyers end up in Hell, in these jokes some lawyers try to gain entry into Heaven, and even attempt to negotiate or arguing with St. Peter, though they almost never succeed in doing so (see Chapter 5). Devastating hatred towards lawyers is shown in the following joke in which St. Peter asks a **teacher**, a **garbage collector**, and a **lawyer** to answer just one question in order to be admitted to Heaven.

One day, a teacher, a garbage collector, and a lawyer all died and went to Heaven. St. Peter was there, having a bad day because heaven was getting crowded. When they got to the gate, St. Peter informed them that there would be a test to get into Heaven: They each had to answer a single question.

To the teacher he said, “What was the name of the ship that crashed into an iceberg and sunk with all its passengers?”

The teacher thought for a second, and then replied: “That would have been the Titanic, right?” St. Peter let him through the gate.

Next, St. Peter turned to the garbage man, and figuring that heaven didn’t really need all the stink that this guy would bring in, decided to make the question a little harder. “How many people died on the ship?”

The garbage man guessed 1228, to which St. Peter said, “That happens to be right. Go ahead.”

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118 <http://www.jokes.net/butchershop.htm>

St. Peter then turned to the lawyer. “What were their names?”<sup>119</sup>

Of course, the teacher and the garbage collector are given easier questions than the lawyer. St. Peter definitely didn't want to let the lawyer into Heaven, that's why he asked the lawyer the most difficult question, the one which the teacher or the garbage collector would not have been able to answer either. The joke is of course at the lawyer's expense. He's the only one singled out on the basis of dislike towards him and on assumption that he can't be a decent person. Thus, the lawyer will most probably be rejected entry into Heaven (as we learn from the vast majority of jokes quoted and discussed in Chapter 5).

In Chapter 1 we have already discussed one of stereotypical traits of lawyers, namely their ability to easily “change white into black”, and reshape reality according to the needs of their clients. Thus, they are able to change the outcome of  $2+2$ , in accordance with what is wanted from them. That text, along with a lawyer, involved a housewife and an accountant, and can be compared with the text below involving a **mathematician** and **economist**:

A university committee was selecting a new dean. They had narrowed the candidates down to a mathematician, an economist and a lawyer. Each was asked this question during their interview: “How much is two plus two?”

The mathematician answered immediately, “Four.”

The economist thought for several minutes and finally answered, “Four, plus or minus one.”

Finally the lawyer stood up, peered around the room and motioned silently for the committee members to gather close to him. In a hushed, conspiratorial tone, he replied, “How much do you want it to be?”<sup>120</sup>

Both the texts stress the “hushed” tone of the **lawyer** (in the second text the

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119 <http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Humor/Lawyer.htm>

120 <http://www.myptsmail.com/harold/blog/?p=648>

word “conspiratorial” also appears), who is willing to show his readiness to put his ability to reshape reality at the service of his ‘client’.

The following joke shows us an interaction of a **lawyer**, a **ranger** and a **bandit**. Speaking different languages, a Mexican bandit and a Texan ranger don’t understand each other. Fortunately, or rather, unfortunately for the bandit, a bilingual lawyer offers his service to help them:

A Mexican bandit made a specialty of crossing the Rio Grande from time to time and robbing banks in Texas. Finally, a reward was offered for his capture, and an enterprising Texas ranger decided to track him down.

After a lengthy search, he traced the bandit to his favorite cantina, snuck up behind him, put his trusty six-shooter to the bandit’s head, and said, “You’re under arrest. Tell me where you hid the loot or I’ll blow your brains out!”

But the bandit didn’t speak English, and the Ranger didn’t speak Spanish. Fortunately, a bilingual lawyer was in the saloon and translated the Ranger’s message. The terrified bandit blurted out, in Spanish, that the loot was buried under the oak tree in back of the cantina.

“What did he say?” asked the Ranger.

The lawyer answered, “He said ‘Get lost, Gringo. You wouldn’t dare shoot me.’”<sup>121</sup>

As we know from a number of other jokes quoted in this book, lawyers are regularly put to task for lying. The humor of the joke comes from, among other things, the simplicity of the lawyer’s action (lying), so that he can come into possession of the money the bandit has buried.

Many more jokes involving lawyers together with representatives of other professions and occupations could be discussed and exemplified here. Each of them could also be supported by dozens – if not hundreds – of jokes, but we have to draw the line somewhere.

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<sup>121</sup> [http://www.101funjokes.com/lawyer\\_joke\\_2.htm](http://www.101funjokes.com/lawyer_joke_2.htm)



## Conclusion

This chapter has focused on stereotypical features of lawyers compared to representatives of other professions and occupations. The figure of the lawyer most frequently appears in our jokes together with the figure of his eternal rival, the doctor. The representatives of the law and medicine, the two most prestigious professions in America, are very often shown fighting and competing with each other, and the lawyer generally outwits the doctor. There are a number of jokes that help illustrate how people differentiate the lawyer's stereotype from the doctor's. These texts, on the one hand, show fairly consistent features such as the innocence, decency, honesty, gullibility, naiveté, and even stupidity of doctors and, on the other hand, the calculation, manipulation, dishonesty, untrustworthiness, and cunning of lawyers. Contrarily to a few texts in which lawyers and doctors are treated equally (usually equally badly), in the overwhelming majority of our texts, however, the qualities of lawyers are much more unflattering than those of doctors. In the jokes, doctors generally draw more sympathy than lawyers, whose inventiveness and cunning are turned against them. Furthermore, in these jokes lawyers are frequently compared to prostitutes, and not in favor of the lawyers, might we add. Priests are also main figures in American lawyer jokes. Politicians do not show up too frequently in our jokes at all; on the other hand, a number of American jokes about politicians have been found in which the wording is (almost) the same as in jokes about lawyers. There are many other professions and occupations subjected to mockery in American lawyer jokes: e.g., mathematicians, economists, housewives, teachers, policemen, garbage collectors, janitors, architects, barbers, scientists, accountants, engineers and many others. In many of these texts, although the lawyer is the least positive figure, he is also the one who generally outwits representatives of other professions. As folk wisdom has it, *The smart guy wins*.

## CHAPTER 3

### The Lawyer as Animal in American Lawyer Jokes<sup>122</sup>

*Q: What's the difference between a porcupine and a Mercedes Benz full of lawyers?*

*A: The porcupine has pricks on the outside. (Joke)<sup>123</sup>*

#### The focus of the present chapter

As we have seen from the previous two chapters, the greatest anger and irritation in American lawyer jokes is directed at the high cost of lawsuits, the high income of lawyers, as well as their greed and stinginess, ignorance and skillful manipulation, their corruption and dishonesty. Very frequently lawyers appear in jokes simultaneously with their eternal rival, the doctor (or physician, or other medical people). In those jokes the lawyer generally outwits the doctor. Those texts also contain calculation, manipulation, dishonesty, untrustworthiness, and canning as fairly consistent traits of lawyers. The goal of Chapter 3 is to concentrate on a specific segment of American lawyer jokes, namely, jokes in which lawyers are compared to animals. While Section 1 addresses jokes in which lawyers are compared to sharks, emblems of ferocity and power, Section 2 focuses on the association of lawyers with snakes, symbols of deception and slyness. Section 3 reviews jokes in which lawyers are compared to rats, seen as vicious and unclean animals, being blamed for spreading disease, and Section 4 treats the parallel drawn between lawyers and various blood-sucking animals such as ticks

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122 An earlier, shorter version of this chapter was published under the title *The Lawyer as Animal in American Lawyer Jokes* (see T. Litovkina 2016). For a detailed discussion of this topic in Hungarian, see also the article published under the title *Az ügyvédek mint állatfaj – amerikai ügyvédviccek elemzése* [The lawyers as animal species: analysis of American lawyer jokes] (T. Litovkina 2010a).

123 <http://www.funnyandjokes.com/lawyer-q-and-a.html>

and leeches. Last but not least, Section 5 examines texts in which lawyers are brought up as parallels to some other animals, such as vultures, foxes, skunks, donkeys, bullfrogs, bulldogs, pit bull terriers, porcupines, donkeys, pigs, along with other members of the animal kingdom.

## Discussion

In American lawyer jokes there is a long tradition of comparing lawyers to different animals, generally ones which are considered dangerous, poisonous or sly – animals with negative connotations. It is not surprising that among the parallels, one can find predators of different kinds, scavengers and parasites. The animals most frequently paired with lawyers in these jokes are the shark, the snake, the rat, the tick and the leech.

### 3.1. Lawyers and sharks

In America the **shark** image has been embraced by some lawyers as a totem, the symbol of ferocity and power. One can even find such parallels on T-shirts, cards and in advertisements (Galanter 2002: 2229). According to Galanter, the term ‘shark’ with regard to ‘lawyer’ is not a modern invention: it was applied to lawyers before the mid-nineteenth century (Galanter 2008: 393). Not surprisingly, a lot of jokes and humorous texts displayed on different websites also embrace such parallels. Among them is *James Fuqua’s Law Jokes: Sharks and Lawyers – A Comparative Study*. Let us view only the first four paragraphs of the text, which will help us to understand some features a lawyer and the emblematic predator, the shark, have in common:

“Shark” comes from the German “schurke”, meaning greedy parasite. While no brave soul has gotten close enough to determine where lawyers come from, logic and common sense dictate a similar derivation.

Sharks, unlike most fish, have no bones; their skeletons are made

entirely of cartilage. Lawyers, too, are spineless – as willing to argue one side of a case as the other. For the right price.

Best known as scavengers of the dead and dying, sharks have well-honed sensors with which they can track the sounds of other injured and struggling beings. They are also equipped with fine senses of smell that allow them to detect minute dilutions of blood (one part blood to one million parts water) up to one-quarter mile away. Precisely the distance a hopeful personal injury lawyer will run behind an ambulance to toss a business card.

From the moment of birth, sharks' skin is tough and rough – covered with thousands of tiny hard teeth called denticles that abrade any passerby made of softer stuff. Lawyers are also thick-skinned. Easily identified by their humorlessness and abrasive personalities, they are the bane of many social gatherings.<sup>124</sup>

Thus, as the text suggests, both species are parasites and scavengers of the dead and dying; moreover, both lawyers and sharks are spineless and thick-skinned.

The scene of the following joke is the seashore, a popular vacation place for doctors and lawyers (and not only when their vacation is financed from fire or flood insurance proceeds, see the joke quoted in Chapter 2!), where a doctor is frightened and faints after seeing a shark fin which reminds him of a lawyer:

A doctor was vacationing at the seashore with his family. Suddenly, he spotted a fin sticking up in the water and fainted.

“Darling, it was just a shark,” assured his wife when he came to.

“You’ve got to stop imagining that there are lawyers everywhere.”<sup>125</sup>

Naturally, the fear of the doctor is over exaggerated to grotesqueness. The joke’s message is that, in comparison to lawyers, sharks are less harmful.

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124 <http://www.jamesfuqua.com/lawyers/jokes/sharks.shtml>

125 <http://www.resourcesforattorneys.com/lawyerjokes.html>

Therefore, when one sees a lawyer (or even merely imagines seeing him!), it is entirely justified to run for your life.

In the following text, a lawyer is depicted as a money-grabbing shark:

What happened to the banker who went to law school? Now she's a loan shark.<sup>126</sup>

The last joke quoted in this section is one of the many based on the equation of lawyers with sharks:

Q: Why won't sharks attack lawyers?

A: Professional courtesy.<sup>127</sup>



Illustration 15<sup>128</sup>

<sup>126</sup> <http://www.kaila.pl/humor/lawyers.htm>

<sup>127</sup> <http://www.funnyandjokes.com/lawyer-q-and-a.html>

<sup>128</sup> <http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Humor/Lawyer.htm> [Retrieved March 24, 2016]



Illustration 16<sup>129</sup>



Illustration 17<sup>130</sup>

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129 <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/339247784401613802/> [Retrieved March 24, 2016]

130 <http://www.iciclesoftware.com/LawJokes/IcicleLawJokes.html> [Retrieved March 24, 2016]



Illustration 18<sup>131</sup>



Illustration 19<sup>132</sup>

131 [http://www.zazzle.co.uk/funny\\_mousepad\\_shark\\_lawyer\\_mouse\\_pad-144545227981597965](http://www.zazzle.co.uk/funny_mousepad_shark_lawyer_mouse_pad-144545227981597965) [Retrieved May 12, 2016]

132 <http://www.theshirtdudes.com/shark-lawyer.html> [Retrieved March 24, 2016]



Illustration 20<sup>133</sup>

### 3.2. Lawyers and snakes

In Christianity and Judaism the serpent, which appears in the first book of the Bible (Genesis, 3: 1) before Adam and Eve as an agent of the Devil and tempts them with the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, has long been a symbol of deviousness, deception, treachery, slyness, and cunning. Lawyers in our jokes are depicted as even more cunning and deceptive than snakes:

What's the difference between a poisonous snake and a lawyer?

You can make a pet out of the snake.<sup>134</sup>

Q: Why did God make snakes just before lawyers?

A: To practice.<sup>135</sup>

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133 <https://www.cartoonstock.com/directory/s/sharks.asp> [Retrieved March 24, 2016]

134 <http://www.extremelysmart.com/humor/lawyerjokes.php>

135 <http://www.funnyandjokes.com/lawyer-q-and-a.html>



The following text draws a parallel between the lawyer and the rattlesnake (a venomous snake, the bites of which are very often fatal) and the tiger (one of the largest predators in the world). According to the text, the lawyer is considered to be even more dangerous than the tiger or the rattlesnake, animals few people would like to come up against:

You're trapped in a room with a tiger, a rattlesnake and a lawyer. Your gun has only two bullets. What should you do?  
Shoot the lawyer. Twice.<sup>136</sup>

The association of lawyers with snakes is further made in the following two jokes. The first one resembles the last joke of the previous section, about a shark:

Why don't snakes bite attorneys? Professional courtesy.<sup>137</sup>

A blind rabbit and a blind snake meet each other. Neither one remembers what kind of animal they are, so they decide to feel each other.

The rabbit says, "You feel me first." The snake says okay, and he starts feeling the rabbit. He says, "Well, you have fur all over, and a little cotton tail, and two long ears, and big back feet..."

The rabbit says, "I know! I'm a rabbit! Yippee!" Then the rabbit feels the snake.

He says, "Okay, you're long and thin, and slimy all over, and there's a little forked tongue..."

The snake says, "Oh no! I'm a lawyer!"<sup>138</sup>

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136 [http://wilk4.com/humor/humorm353\\_lawyers.htm](http://wilk4.com/humor/humorm353_lawyers.htm)

137 <http://www.mifsudbonnici.com/lexnet/jokes/index.html>

138 <http://www.myfunnypost.com/animal/the-rabbit-and-the-snake-joke.html>

Some other texts also compare lawyers to snakes:

Q: If you drop a snake and an attorney off the Empire State Building, which one hits first?

A: Who cares?<sup>139</sup>

Q: Why are there so many lawyers in the U.S.?

A: Because St. Patrick chased the snakes out of Ireland.<sup>140</sup>

Someone mistakenly left the cages open in the Reptile House at the zoo and there were snakes slithering all over the place.

Frantically, the keeper tried everything, but he couldn't get the slippery animals back into their cages. Finally, he yelled, "Quick, call a lawyer!"

"A lawyer? Why?"

"We need someone who speaks their language."<sup>141</sup>

What's the difference between a lawyer and a snake run down on the highway?

Skid marks in front of the snake.<sup>142</sup>

### 3.3. Lawyers and rats

Another animal which is quite often brought up in lawyer jokes is the **rat**, an animal frequently used for medical experiments. The following text<sup>143</sup> suggests that lawyers should be used in medical experiments instead of rats – vicious, unclean, and parasitic animals spreading disease (for example, pestilence – the 14th-century plague called the Black Death), and associated in people's minds with aggression, war, and death:

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139 <http://www.9timezones.com/ia/lawques.htm>

140 <http://www.funnyandjokes.com/lawyer-q-and-a.html>

141 <http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Humor/Lawyer.htm>

142 <http://www.extremelysmart.com/humor/lawyerjokes.php>

143 One can find dozens of variants of this joke on different websites.

The National Institute of Health has announced that it will no longer be using rats for medical experiments. In their place, they will use lawyers. They have given three reasons for this decision:

There are now more lawyers than there are rats.

The medical researchers don't become as emotionally attached to the lawyers as they did to the rats.

No matter how hard you try, there are some things that rats won't do.<sup>144</sup>

The fact that in deciding whether rats or lawyers should be used for medical experiments clear preference is given to lawyers indicates that like rats, lawyers are pests which American society should remove. The three reasons for such a preference are quite forthright, and don't need to be further explained. The joke is also a clear manifestation of the retaliation of doctors (as well as scientists, and laboratory workers involved in medical experiments). One of the reasons for such revenge might be the fact that in American society, doctors are nowadays frequently sued by attorneys (for malpractice). Further jokes also expressing the idea that lawyers are in need of being eradicated are quoted and analyzed in Chapter 4.

When the man in the joke below realizes that the brass rat he has just bought in an antique store attracts, like a magnet, an army of live rats, he goes back to the store in order to get a brass lawyer in the hopes that an army of lawyers will start following the brass lawyer and if he throws it into the river, he might be able to destroy a whole army of them:

A man came across a striking brass rat in an antique store and decided it would look great on his desk. He paid \$100 for it but was surprised when the proprietor insisted it was non-returnable. He said, "It's been returned twice already, and I don't want to see it again."

Leaving the store, the man saw a couple of rats scurrying around the corner; several more were near his car. As he drove, rats appeared from the gutters and side streets until he was nearly overwhelmed.

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<sup>144</sup> <http://www.terry.co.uk/jokes01.html>

In panic, he threw the brass rat over a bridge railing into a river, and witnessed the army of live rats follow it into the depths.

The man hurried back to the store, but the owner cut him short, saying, “Look, I told you there would be no returns.” The man quickly replied, “Oh no, that’s fine. I was just wondering if you had a brass lawyer.”<sup>145</sup>

The joke above reminds us of a historic story about rats and their catching, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, which is embedded in popular culture and has inspired the realms of literature, film, theatre, etc. According to a legend, at the end of 13th century while the German town of Hamelin was suffering from a rat infestation, a rat-catcher promised a solution to the problem and, playing a magical pipe, he managed to lead rats away from the town into a nearby river in which they were drowned. Despite his success and the town’s promise, the piper was refused his payment. Seeking proper revenge, he then decided to play his magic pipe again, hoping to abduct the town’s children. The children of Hamelin were lured into a cave and were never seen again (according to some versions two were left behind, see also Mieder 2007a).



Illustration 21<sup>146</sup>

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145 <http://www.no-lawyers.com/jokes.htm>

146 <http://illustratedrat.blogspot.hu/2015/05/lawyer-rat.html> [Retrieved March 24, 2016]

### 3.4. Lawyers and blood-feeding creatures

In a number of jokes lawyers are compared to various blood-feeding creatures such as ticks and leeches.

The association of the lawyer with the **leech**, which feeds on blood, and which has been used for clinical bloodletting for thousands of years, is made in the following jokes:

Q: What's the difference between a lawyer and a leech?

A: When you die, a leech will stop sucking your blood and drop off.<sup>147</sup>

How do you know when your divorce is getting ugly?

When your lawyer doesn't seem like a bloodsucking leech anymore.<sup>148</sup>

Some other texts bring up parallels with the **tick**, a parasite which lives on blood and is also a vector of a number of diseases, including Lyme disease:

Q: What's the difference between a tick and a lawyer?

A: The tick drops off after you're dead.<sup>149</sup>

Many texts compare attorneys in law with various **blood-feeding beings**:

Q: Why is going to a meeting of the Bar Association like going into a bait shop?

A: Because of the abundance of suckers, leeches, maggots and nightcrawlers.<sup>150</sup> (See also the joke discussed in Chapter 2 about the huge costs of lawyer's brain, the last words of which are "Do you know what a job it is to clean those suckers?"<sup>151</sup>)

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147 <http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Humor/Lawyer.htm>

148 <http://jokeparty.com/>

149 [http://www.lawsongs.com/lawyer\\_jokes.html](http://www.lawsongs.com/lawyer_jokes.html)

150 <http://www.funnyandjokes.com/lawyer-q-and-a.html>

151 [http://jokes.maxabout.com/jid0003938/stanley\\_livingston\\_in\\_deepest.aspx](http://jokes.maxabout.com/jid0003938/stanley_livingston_in_deepest.aspx)

Several texts have been aimed at comparing lawyers to another blood-feeding creature, the **vampire**, a mythological or folkloric being generally identified as feeding on human blood:

Q: What's the difference between a lawyer and a vampire?

A: A vampire only sucks blood at night.<sup>152</sup>

It is vampires that learn from lawyers how to suck blood, and not *vice versa*:

Where do vampires learn to suck blood?

Law school.<sup>153</sup>

Naturally, “sucking blood” in American lawyer jokes is a metaphor for lawyers sucking their clients’ energy and spirit, as well as relieving them of their money. Indeed, lawyers are very frequently called “money grabbers”, a negative trait that has already been discussed in the chapters above. As we can see from the texts just quoted, there is a tremendous difference between lawyers and other bloodsuckers: while vampires suck your blood only at night, and they and leeches and ticks do it while you are alive, lawyers suck your blood all the time, regardless of the time of day and regardless of whether you are alive or dead.

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152 [http://www.lawsongs.com/lawyer\\_jokes.html](http://www.lawsongs.com/lawyer_jokes.html)

153 <http://www.kaila.pl/humor/lawyers.htm>



*"On certain types of wounds we use lawyers instead of leeches because lawyers never seem to get their fill of blood..."*

Illustration 22<sup>154</sup>



2-lawyers T-Shirt  
Men's Basic T

£15.50  
WAS £19



LAWYER37.png T-Shirt  
Men's Basic T

£15.50  
WAS £19

Illustration 23<sup>155</sup>

154 <https://www.cartoonstock.com/directory//leeches.asp> [Retrieved May 25, 2016]

155 <http://www.cafepress.co.uk/+lawyers-are-leeches+gifts> [Retrieved May 25, 2016]

### 3.5. Lawyers and other animals

In the previous four sections we have quoted and analyzed texts in which lawyers are compared to sharks, snakes, rats and various blood-seeking beings. There are also jokes in which lawyers are compared to animals such as vultures, foxes, skunks, donkeys, bullfrogs, and many others as well.

In the texts below the lawyer is compared to another predator, the **vulture**, a scavenger which feeds mostly on the carcasses of dead animals. Similarly to vultures which, using their acute vision and sense of smell to detect gasses produced by injured or dead animals, lawyers are depicted as having good noses for detecting desperate people in need. Once you are in their clutches, it is very difficult, if not outright impossible to extricate yourself from them:

What's the difference between a lawyer and a vulture?

The lawyer gets frequent flyer miles.

What's another difference between a lawyer and a vulture?

Removable wing tips.

What's the last difference between a lawyer and a vulture?

Vultures wait until you're dead to rip your heart out.<sup>156</sup>

The main difference between the two species is that vultures don't feed on their prey when it's still alive, while lawyers "rip your heart out" (frequently grabbing your money), without waiting until you're dead.

Lawyers are sometimes also compared to the **fox** which, in folk perception, is an animal that has the most amazing ability to outsmart both predators and prey, as well as to be able to wriggle free of the most unpleasant situations – just consider the plethora of folktales with the fox as the main protagonist, an animal which possesses such qualities as cunning, cleverness, and slyness (paving the way for the saying, "as sly as a fox"). Similarly to the fox, lawyers are also generally viewed as cunning, clever, and sly beings, big tricksters and liars who can outwit anyone with whom they are in contact. If, when

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<sup>156</sup> [http://wilk4.com/humor/humorm353\\_lawyers.htm](http://wilk4.com/humor/humorm353_lawyers.htm)



compared with the fox, preference is given to the latter, and not the former, it signifies quite a lot. The text below shows us that people have much more feeling for a fox than for a lawyer. Thus, when seeing a fox on the road, a driver tries to use his breaks in order to avoid hitting it, but when he sees a lawyer, no such attempt is made to save him:

Q: How can you tell the difference between a lawyer lying dead in the road and a fox?

A: With the fox, you usually see skid marks.<sup>157</sup>

When compared to a **skunk**, an animal known for its ability to excrete a strong, foul-smelling odor, again, in all the jokes the preference is for the skunk, and not the lawyer:

What is the difference between a dead lawyer and a squished skunk in the road?

The vultures will eat the skunk.<sup>158</sup>

What is the difference between a lawyer and a skunk?

Nobody wants to hit a skunk.<sup>159</sup>

While the joke below verbally stresses a lawyer's clever and cunning nature (e.g., "Being a clever sort"), at the very end of the joke there is a comparison drawn between a lawyer and a **donkey**, an animal which in our minds is a symbol of ignorance, stupidity and limited intelligence. In the joke, while trying to outwit everyone in order to get a new client, the lawyer has brought himself into the most embarrassing situation. By referring to himself as "the son of the victim," the lawyer, without realizing it, brings up a parallel between himself and a donkey:

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157 [http://www.police999.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1306:lawyer-jokes-i&catid=59:humour&Itemid=93](http://www.police999.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1306:lawyer-jokes-i&catid=59:humour&Itemid=93)

This joke can be found in many variants on different websites with a dog or a snake or some other animal being substituted for the fox (see the joke quoted in Section 2).

158 <http://jokeparty.com/>

159 <http://jokeparty.com/>

A lawyer was on vacation in a small farming town. While walking through the streets on a quiet Sunday morning, he came upon a large crowd gathered by the side of the road. Going by instinct, the lawyer figured that there was some sort of auto collision. He was eager to get to the injured parties but couldn't get near the car. Being a clever sort, he started shouting loudly, "Let me through! Let me through! I am the son of the victim."

The crowd made way for him. Lying in front of the car was a donkey.<sup>160</sup>

A number of jokes discussed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 point out the ability of lawyers to talk long and big. Therefore, we are not surprised to see lawyers compared to **bullfrogs**:

What do lawyers and bullfrogs have in common?

Both have a big head that consists mainly of mouth.<sup>161</sup>

There are, in addition, jokes in which lawyers are associated with some other animals (**bulldog, pit bull terrier, donkey and pig**), for example:

How do you tell the difference between a lawyer and a bulldog?

The bulldog generally has enough sense to know when to let go.<sup>162</sup>

What's the difference between an attorney and a pit bull?

Jewelry.<sup>163</sup>

What is the difference between pigs and lawyers?

You can learn to respect a pig.<sup>164</sup>

Many more jokes comparing lawyers with animals could have been quoted and discussed in this chapter, but I feel that the point has now been made.

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160 <http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Humor/Lawyer.htm>

161 <http://www.extremelysmart.com/humor/lawyerjokes.php>

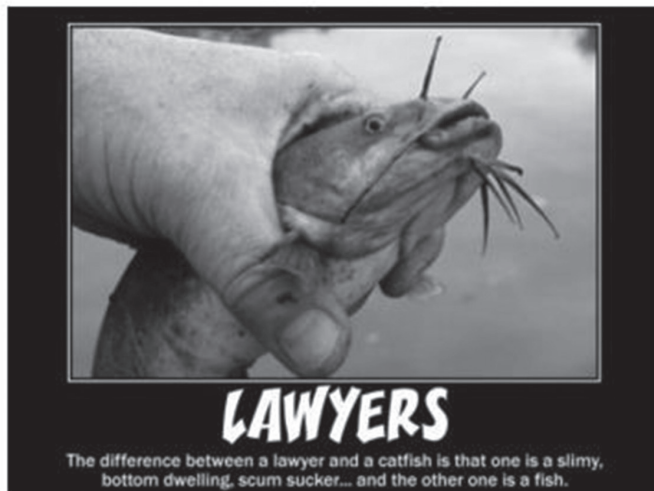
162 <http://www.fords-solicitors.co.uk/solicitors/news.cfm?ID=6>

163 <http://brainden.com/lawyer-jokes.htm>

164 <http://jokeparty.com/>



Illustration 24<sup>165</sup>



*I wish I could squeeze my lawyer like that. Don't you? Share if you do.*

Illustration 25<sup>166</sup>

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165 <http://www.zazzle.com/lawyer+jokes+mens+clothing?pg=2> [Retrieved May 25, 2016]

166 <http://humoropedia.com/20-best-lawyer-jokes/> [Retrieved March 24, 2016]



Illustration 26<sup>167</sup>

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167 <http://www.torgensonlaw.com/torg-blog/lawyerjokes> [Retrieved March 24, 2016]

## Conclusion

As we have seen above, American lawyer jokes frequently draw parallels between lawyers and animals. Lawyers are generally compared to animals which are epitomes of predatory types or scavengers (for example, sharks, vultures and tigers), symbols of slyness, deception and cunning (for example, the snake and fox), or parasites (for example, ticks) which, in folk interpretation, carry negative, dirty, or dangerous connotations (for example, the pit bull and pig). In a number of American lawyer jokes a lawyer is compared to sharks, a symbol of ferocity and power. Among the features that a lawyer and the emblematic predator, the shark, have in common: both species are parasites and scavengers of the dead and dying; moreover, both lawyers and sharks are spineless and thick-skinned. In the jokes, similarly to animals sucking people's blood (for example, leeches and ticks), lawyers pump their clients of their money. What's more, some texts even compare lawyers to animals considered by us to be symbols of ignorance, stupidity and limited intelligence (for example, a donkey or a bullfrog). There are also jokes in which lawyers are brought up as parallels to a number of other animals, such as vultures, skunks, pit bull terriers, porcupines, and pigs, among the others. Some other jokes even suggest a parallel between the lawyer and the rat, associated in people's minds with aggression, war, and death, best exterminated. The following chapter examines jokes honing in on various ways to injure or kill a lawyer, e.g., through drowning, burying alive, hitting by car or bus, running off a cliff, cutting, shooting, laying on the equator, removal of kidneys, throwing out the window, being eaten, and many others.

## CHAPTER 4

### Killing off Lawyers in American Lawyer Jokes<sup>168</sup>

*“The first thing we do, let’s kill all the lawyers.” (William Shakespeare, Henry VI, Part 2)*

#### The focus of the present chapter

The fourth chapter of this book focuses on one large segment of American lawyer jokes: jokes dealing with lawyers’ extermination. The chapter makes an attempt to analyze jokes, the butt of which is lawyers as candidates for removal from society or, frequently, extermination. Different ways through which such extermination can be reached (for example, through drowning, burying alive, hitting by car or bus, running off a cliff, cutting, shooting, eating, use in medical experiments, laying on the equator, removal of kidneys, throwing out a window, and many others) are discussed and exemplified by numerous texts.

#### Discussion

As it has already been pointed out in the introduction to the first part of the book, the famous quotation by William Shakespeare, which serves as a motto to this chapter, has provided fruitful soil for endless transformation, being used in the titles of numerous articles and books about lawyers, e.g. “First Thing We Do Is Kill All the Lawyer Jokes” (Yas 1997: 11); “Modest Alternative to Killing All Lawyers” (Miller 1991: A16); “Kill All The Lawyers:

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<sup>168</sup> Some parts of this chapter were published in a study under the title *Law is hell: Death and the afterlife in American lawyer jokes* (see T. Litovkina 2009a). Some of the parts of the chapter were also published in Hungarian under the title *Az ügyvédekkel történő leszámolás különböző módjai az amerikai ügyvédcickekben* [Various ways of eradicating of lawyers in American lawyer jokes] (see T. Litovkina 2010b).

The Decline and Fall of the Legal Profession” (Bradley 2012). The titles of many books of jokes or cartoons about lawyers express people’s dream of eradicating lawyers, e.g., “Dead Lawyers and Other Pleasant Thoughts” (Miller 1993). How do people want to get rid of them?

Let us start our discussion with one of the favorite ways of eradicating lawyers, **drowning**:

“Do you know how to save a drowning lawyer?”

“No.”

“Good!”<sup>169</sup>

If a lawyer and an IRS<sup>170</sup> agent were both drowning, and you could only save one of them, would you go to lunch or read the paper?<sup>171</sup>

Q: What do you call 5000 dead lawyers at the bottom of the ocean?

A: A good start!<sup>172</sup>

How do you save a drowning lawyer?

Take your foot off his head.<sup>173</sup>

Drowning lawyers is not the only way to exterminate them: American lawyer jokes suggest that there is more than one way to kill a lawyer. Let’s observe two question-answer jokes which propose **hanging** and **cutting up** attorneys:

Q: How do you know if a lawyer is well-hung?

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169 <http://www.ravnwood.com/archives/005647.php>

170 International Revenue Service (IRS) is the United States government agency responsible for tax collection and tax law enforcement.

171 [http://jokes.smashits.com/view-6697-if\\_a\\_lawyer\\_and\\_an\\_irs\\_agent\\_were\\_both\\_drowning\\_an.html](http://jokes.smashits.com/view-6697-if_a_lawyer_and_an_irs_agent_were_both_drowning_an.html)

172 <http://www.funnyandjokes.com/lawyer-q-and-a.html>

173 <http://www.momssoftco.com/jfile/lawyers.txt>

A: When you can't fit your fingers between the rope and his neck.<sup>174</sup>

Q: What's the difference between a lawyer and an onion?

A: You cry when you cut up an onion.<sup>175</sup>

The first joke cited above also plays on a double meaning of the word “well-hung” (having a large penis vs. to be hung properly, i.e. referring to the wish of people for lawyers to die).

Another popular way of lawyers' removal from society is **killing them in a road accident**. They might be **run over and hit by a car or bus**:

How many lawyers does it take to stop a moving bus?

Never enough.<sup>176</sup>

What do you do if you run over a lawyer?

Back over him to make sure. Then, make another notch on the steering wheel.<sup>177</sup>

As hard as it might be to imagine lawyers walking down the road, it is almost impossible to imagine lawyers taking a bus, but anything might happen in a joke. In Section 2.4 I cited a joke describing lawyers' deaths while taking a bus. In the following joke a **bus load of lawyers runs off a cliff**:

Good News: A busload of lawyers ran off a cliff. The bus was destroyed and there were no survivors.

Bad News: There were three empty seats.<sup>178</sup>

The next joke is no kinder to lawyers when it buries them alive: of exterminating lawyers, by **burying them alive**:

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174 [http://www.lawsongs.com/lawyer\\_jokes.html](http://www.lawsongs.com/lawyer_jokes.html)

175 <http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Humor/Lawyer.htm>

176 <http://www.kaila.pl/humor/lawyers.htm>

177 <http://jokeparty.com/>

178 <http://www.terry.co.uk/jokes01.html>



Q: What do you have if three lawyers are buried up to their necks in cement?

A: Not enough cement.<sup>179</sup>

In other jokes, popular wish-fulfillment for a world free of lawyers, they are flung to animals **to be eaten**, as in the joke below, which relies on two different connotations of the word “serve”:

A man walks into a bar with a crocodile and asks “Do you serve Lawyers here?”

“We sure do”, the bar tender answered. “Good,” the man says “I’ll have a beer and my croc will have a lawyer”.<sup>180</sup>

When the man from the text above entering the bar with a crocodile asks if they serve lawyers, we interpret his question as if lawyers, similarly to people of other professions and occupations, are allowed to consume in the bar; and we might even presume that he is a lawyer himself. And the bartender, naturally, gives him a positive reply. He obviously thinks the word “serve” is used in the following connotation: “to provide (customers or users) with goods or services” (Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary 1983: 1658). Indeed, why should there be any discrimination of lawyers? Why shouldn’t they be served? When we hear, however, the response of the customer ordering a lawyer for his crocodile, we realize that he is not a lawyer; on the contrary, he hates lawyers, and what he means by his question is not whether lawyers are allowed to drink in the bar, but whether lawyers (as a meal) are served there, i.e., the word “served” is used in a different sense: “to prepare and offer (food, etc.) in a certain way to others” (Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary 1983: 1658).

Another way of getting rid of lawyers is by **shooting** them, as the following joke suggests:

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<sup>179</sup> [http://www.answerbag.com/q\\_view/307855](http://www.answerbag.com/q_view/307855)

<sup>180</sup> <http://www.fords-solicitors.co.uk/solicitors/news.cfm?ID=6>

Q: If you are stranded on a desert island with Adolph Hitler, Attila the Hun, and a lawyer, and you have a gun with only two bullets, what do you do?

A: Shoot the lawyer twice.<sup>181</sup>

In the text above, we are recommended, while stranded on a desert island, to shoot a lawyer twice<sup>182</sup> instead of shooting Adolph Hitler and Attila the Hun. Thus, the joke above suggests that lawyers are worse, even, than Attila the Hun and Adolph Hitler.

In the same vein as the Shakespeare's famous anti-lawyer line, "The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers" (Henry VI, Part 2), the following two texts also have fantasies about destroying all the lawyers in the world. The first text suggests that they could find their end on the equator, merely **being laid** there, "end to end". No violence is needed, the heat and the sun will do the work for us:

If you laid all of the lawyers in the world, end to end, on the equator – It would be a good idea to just leave them there.<sup>183</sup>

Another way of exterminating every lawyer in the world, through **removing their kidneys**, even at the expense of one's own health (losing one kidney), is brought up in the following text:

A man walking along the beach found a bottle. When he rubbed it, lo and behold, a genie appeared.

"I will grant you three wishes," announced the genie. "But there is one condition. I am a lawyer's genie. That means that for every wish you

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181 <http://www.funnyandjokes.com/lawyer-q-and-a.html>

182 A similar joke has been discussed in Chapter 3. That text, although in a slightly different setting, and with different personages (a room instead of a desert island, and instead of some of the most dangerous and brutal people in the history of the world the personages are a tiger and a rattlesnake), contains a similar anti-lawyer sentiment, and follows a similar scenario.

183 [http://www.jk9.com/lawyer\\_humor.htm](http://www.jk9.com/lawyer_humor.htm)

make, every lawyer in the world gets the wish as well – only double.” The man thought about this for a while. “For my first wish, I would like ten million dollars,” he announced. Instantly the genie gave him a Swiss bank account number and assured the man that \$10,000,000 had been deposited. “But every lawyer in the world has just received \$20,000,000,” the genie said. “I’ve always wanted a Ferrari,” the man said. “That’s my second wish.” Instantly a Ferrari appeared. “But every lawyer in the world has just received two Ferraris,” the genie said. “And what is your last wish?” “Well,” said the man, “I’ve always wanted to donate a kidney.”<sup>184</sup>

The joke below recommends getting rid of lawyers by **flinging them out the window**:

A Russian, a Cuban, an American and a Lawyer are in a train. The Russian takes a bottle of the Best Vodka out of his pack, pours some into a glass, drinks it, and says: “In USSR, we have the best vodka in the world, nowhere in the world can you find Vodka as good as the one we produce in the Ukraine. And we have so much of it, that we can just throw it away.” Saying that, he opens the window and throws the rest of the bottle through it. All the others are quite impressed. The Cuban takes out a box of Havanas, takes one, lights it and begins to smoke it saying: “In Cuba, we have the best cigars in the world: Nowhere else in the world are there so many and so good cigars. We have so many of them, we can just throw them away.” Saying that, he throws the pack of Havanas through the window. Again, everybody is quite impressed. Next, the American stands up, opens the window, and throws the Lawyer through it.<sup>185</sup>

As we know from our own experience, the more you have of something, the less you appreciate it. **In the case of American lawyers**, their great

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184 <http://www.resourcesforattorneys.com/lawyersgeniejoke.html>

185 [http://www.101funjokes.com/funny\\_lawyer\\_jokes\\_4.htm](http://www.101funjokes.com/funny_lawyer_jokes_4.htm)

numbers, paired with their undesirability, can all too easily lead to the wish to get rid of them, as the joke above suggests. Similarly to the enormous amount of vodka Russians might boast about, or the excess of cigars Cubans are proud of, Americans might brag about the abundance of lawyers they have. Interestingly, everybody in the joke above is quite impressed when the unfinished bottle of the Best Vodka, or the unfinished box of Havanas are thrown away, but nobody shows any surprise, sorrow or sympathy for the lawyer, when he is flung through the window. For the American passenger it is not even necessary to boast about the best lawyers in the world or about their great numbers. He assumes that everyone is familiar with these facts. He simply throws the lawyer through the window: no explanation is needed. Indeed, as statistics show, during 1980s the US experienced not only a dramatic increase in the number of lawyer jokes, but also in the number of lawyers. Thus, the number of lawyers in the United States has grown from 285,000 in 1960 to over one million at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Carson 2004: 1). Even before the American lawyer jokes' explosion in the eighties, it was observed: "We already have at least ten times as many lawyers as any rational society can tolerate, which doubtless accounts for the triumph of irrationality in American life" (Baker 1977: 12).

As it is known from people's real lives, terrorists often threaten to kill hostages. In the text below, however, the threat of a very particular group of terrorists is quite opposite: to "release one lawyer every hour". Naturally such a statement can be a real threat only because there are too many lawyers in America, and they are the object of great scorn:

A group of terrorists burst into the conference room at the Ramada Hotel where the American Bar Association was holding its Annual Convention. More than 500 lawyers were taken as hostages. The terrorist leader announced that unless their demands were met, they would release one lawyer every hour.<sup>186</sup>

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186 [http://wilk4.com/humor/humorm353\\_lawyers.htm](http://wilk4.com/humor/humorm353_lawyers.htm)

There is a group of lawyer jokes which are about **lawyers' deaths, but don't mention the reason for it**, as in the texts below. The following text stresses that lawyers are such desirable group to kill that even a criminal who has murdered a lawyer is sentenced to just three days in prison for his crime (quite a symbolic punishment for a murder!):

Two prisoners are talking about their crimes:

George: "I robbed a bank, and they gave me 20 years"

Herman: "Hmm. I killed a man, and I'm here for 3 days"

George: "«WHAT\*??? I rob a bank and get 20 years; you kill a man and get 3 days???"

Herman: "Yeah, it was a lawyer."<sup>187</sup>

Mr. Spenser, in the text below, is so happy and excited to hear the news about the death of his ex-wife's lawyer (one can imagine how outrageous and devastating someone's hatred towards one's ex-spouse's lawyer might be in America!) that he wants to hear this 'wonderful' piece of news repeated, calling a law firm reception again and again:

A law firm receptionist answered the phone the morning after the firm's senior partner had passed away unexpectedly. "Is Mr. Spenser there?" asked the client on the phone.

"I'm very sorry, but Mr. Spenser passed away last night," the receptionist answered. "Can anyone else help you?"

The man paused for a moment, then quietly said, "No," and hung up. Ten minutes later, he called again and asked for Mr. Spenser, his ex-wife's lawyer. The receptionist said, "You just called a few minutes ago, didn't you? Mr. Spenser has died. I'm not making this up." The man again hung up.

Fifteen minutes later, he called a third time and asked for Mr. Spenser. The receptionist was irked by this time. "I've told you twice already, Mr. Spenser is dead. He is not here! Why do you keep asking for him when I say he's dead? Don't you understand what I'm saying?"

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<sup>187</sup> <http://www.ahajokes.com/law067.html>

The man replied, “I understand you perfectly. I just like hearing you say it over and over.”<sup>188</sup>

When in the joke below news of an eminent lawyer’s death in a local paper appears to be a mistake, the paper publishes the correction with “regret”. The feeling of regret, however, refers not only to the error, but to the fact that the subject of the obituary is still alive:

A local newspaper mistakenly printed an obituary for the town’s oldest practicing lawyer. He called them immediately and threatened to sue unless they printed a correction.

The next day, the following notice appeared, “We regret that the report of Attorney Critchley’s death was in error.”<sup>189</sup>

According to the two jokes below, the **cemetery** is one of the best places for a ‘good’ lawyer. While the first text, based on the American chauvinistic saying, *A good Indian is a dead Indian*, stresses the idea that attorneys are good only when they’re dead, the second one emphasizes again and again that they’re not good human beings, except, perhaps, very deep down, where exactly, the joke doesn’t say. The second joke also plays on the double meaning of “deep down” (buried “deep down” in the soil, as opposed to being good “deep down”, where it doesn’t show). The joke is also based on the usual setup: the person answering a question deliberately misunderstands it:

Q. Where can you find a good lawyer?

A. In the cemetery.<sup>190</sup>

Why should lawyers be buried 100 feet deep?

Because deep down, they’re really good people.<sup>191</sup>

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188 <http://www.comedy-zone.net/jokes/laugh/lawyers/law007.htm>

189 <http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Humor/Lawyer.htm>

190 <http://www.wakelydam.com/lawyers.html>

191 <http://www.nerdtests.com/jokes.php?id=1621>

As Davies states: “Lawyers are very rarely attacked by clients or those they encounter in their work; the risks they face on a daily basis from the violent and the hostile are far less than those encountered by police officers, firemen, social workers, school teachers, and doctors and nurses treating accident and emergency cases” (Davies 2008: 382). According to his opinion, attorneys’ chances of being persecuted or dispossessed in America are simply zero; “the existence of such jokes in widespread circulation in America is an indication of how safe American lawyers are, for the jokes neither evoke the general unease nor the hysterical accusations of bad taste that would be aroused if American lawyers really were hated and menaced” (Davies 2008: 382). Jokes such as the ones quoted and analyzed in this chapter are “a perfect example of how jokes that seem to have a viciously hostile content can be full of sound and fury yet signifying nothing” (Davies 2008: 382).

Fred Rodell calls the law “an unnecessary and expensive nuisance” (Rodell 1939: 245). He also points out: “The answer is to get rid of the lawyers and throw The Law with a capital L out of our system of laws” (Rodell 1939: 249). Negative feelings against the legal profession are also epitomized by the following quotation: “If all lawyers were hanged tomorrow, and their bones sold to a mah jong factory, we’d all be freer and safer, and our taxes would be reduced by almost a half” (Mencken, quoted in Rodger 1991: 286). Galanter states that the wish to live in a world without attorneys is “an enduring dream of making language transparent, eliminating ambiguity, and dispensing with the need for interpretation” (Galanter 2008: 404).

I would like to finish my discussion with Galanter’s words:

Americans, who regard the rule of law as a defining and essential quality of their society, don’t want to be rid of law, but of “lawyers’ law” – of formal, complex, “artificial” law that only lawyers can understand. If only, it is fondly believed, we were rid of these lawyers we could return to a better law – simple, natural, direct and understandable. Lawyers are seen as obstacles interposed between us and harmonious natural state of social order. (Galanter 2008: 403)

Many more jokes containing further fantasies about dead lawyers, or about their eradication from society could have been quoted and discussed here, but we need to draw the line somewhere.

## Conclusion

As it has been discussed in this chapter, quite a serious segment of American lawyer jokes expresses fantasies of lawyers being eradicated. There is more than one way to kill a lawyer in American lawyer jokes: dozens of ways have been demonstrated through which such extinction can be achieved, e.g., through drowning, burying alive, hitting by car or bus, running off a cliff, cutting, shooting, eating, using in medical experiments, laying on the equator, removal of kidneys, throwing out the window, and many others. In fact, many jokes also encourage killing lawyers by emphasizing that such murder will not be punished severely. Chapter 5 examines Hell as a place lawyers generally go to after their death – in American lawyer jokes, at any rate.

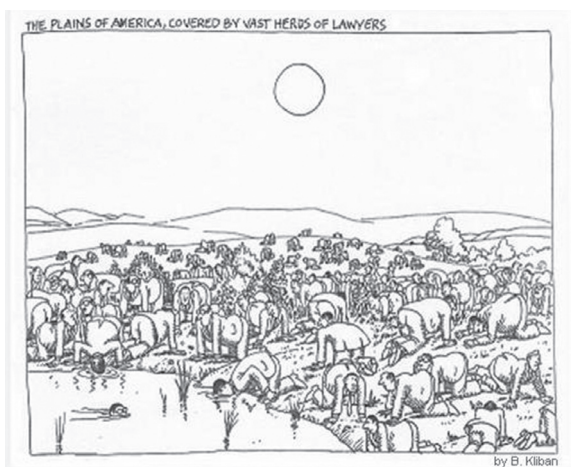


Illustration 27<sup>192</sup>

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192 <http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Humor/Lawyer.htm> [Retrieved March 24, 2016]



## CHAPTER 5

### After they Die, Lawyers Go to Hell<sup>193</sup>

*Until hell is full, no lawyer can be saved. (American proverb)*

#### The focus of the present chapter

Chapter 5 makes an attempt to answer the following question: Where do lawyers end up after they die in American lawyer jokes? Places we are going to discuss here are the gates of Heaven, Hell, allusion to Hell, and last but not least, Heaven itself as seen in these jokes with relationship to lawyers. The chapter is divided accordingly into four sections.

#### Discussion

The vast majority of jokes treating the subject of what happens to lawyers once they are dead say that after they die, lawyers go to Hell. Some lawyer jokes on various websites are even grouped under the heading “Lawyers in Hell”<sup>194</sup>. This is consistent with some old English legal proverbs, sayings and comparisons: “Few lawyers die well,” “Fair and softly as lawyer go to heaven,” “The devil makes his Christmas pies of clerks’ fingers and lawyers’ tongues,” etc. (for more on English legal proverbs, see Bond 1936 and Chapter 6 below). A recently recorded American proverb says that, *Until hell is full, no lawyer can be saved* (see Mieder et al. 1992: 297).

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193 Some parts of this chapter were published in a study under the title *Law is hell: Death and the afterlife in American lawyer jokes* (see T. Litovkina 2009a). Some parts of the chapter were also published in a study in Hungarian language under the title *Az ügyvédekkel történő leszámolás különböző módjai az amerikai ügyvédcikkekben* [Various ways of eradicating of lawyers in American lawyer jokes] (see T. Litovkina 2010b).

194 As for example, on the following site: [http://www.lifeisajoke.com/miscellaneous17\\_html.htm](http://www.lifeisajoke.com/miscellaneous17_html.htm)

## 5.1. Entrance to Heaven

A frequent scene of lawyer jokes is **the entrance to Heaven**, a place where almost no lawyers are accepted, due to their plentiful sins. In spite of this, some lawyers try to gain entrance to Heaven by attempting to negotiate with St. Peter, but they almost never succeed.

The following joke is situated at the entrance to Heaven:

A lawyer died and arrived at the Pearly Gates. To his dismay, there were thousands of people ahead of him in line to see St. Peter. To his surprise, St. Peter left his desk at the gate and came down the long line to where the lawyer was, and greeted him warmly.

Then St. Peter and one of his assistants took the lawyer by the hand and guided him up to the front of the line, and into a comfortable chair by his desk.

The lawyer said, "I don't mind all this attention, but what makes me so special?"

St. Peter replied, "Well, I've added up all the hours for which you billed your clients, and by my calculation you must be about 193 years old!"<sup>195</sup>

The dead lawyer in the joke above is treated by St. Peter with seemingly great respect and warmth. The lawyer can't understand the attention and warm greeting given him. The punch line of the joke, St. Peter's reply ("Well, I've added up all the hours for which you billed your clients, and by my calculation you must be about 193 years old!"), however, makes us understand the reason for such 'respect'. Most probably, this lawyer, despite the fact that he is brought to the head of the line, will not get admittance to Heaven, for all his cheating, overcharging his clients, billing them for time he did not expand on their cases.

The setting of the following joke is also at the gate to Heaven. A lawyer who

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<sup>195</sup> <http://nationaljoke.com/home/tag/lawyer/>

has committed hundreds of sins in his life nevertheless wants to gain entry into Heaven:

A lawyer is standing at the gates of Heaven and St. Peter is listing his sins:

1. Defending a large corporation in a pollution suit when he knew the company was guilty.
2. Defending an obviously guilty murderer because the fee was high.
3. Overcharging clients.
4. Prosecuting an innocent woman because a scapegoat was needed in a controversial case.

The list goes on for quite a while. The lawyer objects and begins to argue his case. He admits all these things, but argues, "Wait, I've done some charity in my life also." St. Peter looks in his book and says, "Yes, I see. Once you gave a dime to a panhandler and once you gave an extra nickel to the shoeshine boy, correct?" The lawyer gets a smug look on his face and replies, "Yes!" St. Peter turns to the angel next to him and whispers, "Give this guy 15 cents and tell him to go to Hell."<sup>196</sup>

Despite hearing all his sins listed by St. Peter, the lawyer tries to negotiate and argue (we know that lawyers are good negotiators!). He says that he has done some charity in his life as well, and he hopes it will help him to get acceptance to Heaven. When, however, St. Peter finds in his book the amount of money the lawyer gave to charity (a dime to a panhandler and a nickel to a shoeshine boy!), we cannot help but smile. To call a dime or a nickel "charity"? Only a cynical and greedy lawyer could name such breadcrumbs "charity". Measure for measure: in return for his two "generous" deeds, the lawyer is given his money back (15 cents), and afterwards is sent to Hell.

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196 <http://www.jacksonlawoffices.com/Jokes>



Illustration 28<sup>197</sup>

## 5.2. Hell

**Hell turns out to be a fairly conventional setting for lawyers after they die.**

Some jokes describe people's fantasies about seeing "all of the lawyers gathered in the hottest place" in Hell:

One cold winter's night last century, an evangelist was on a preaching tour when he came to a small town.

He entered the local general store to get some warmth, and saw the town's lawyers gathered around the pot-bellied stove, discussing the town's business, but not one offered to allow him into the circle.

He told the men who he was, and that he had recently had a vision where he had been given a tour of Hell, much like the traveler in

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197 <http://www.stus.com/stus-category.php?cat=NOW&sub=JOK> [Retrieved May 12, 2016]

Dante's *Inferno*.

When one of the lawyers asked him what he'd seen, he replied: "Very much what I see here: All of the lawyers, gathered in the hottest place."<sup>198</sup>

The tired evangelist from the text above, whose natural hope on a cold winter night, to be given a seat next to the stove, was not properly met by inhospitable, unwelcoming lawyers "gathered around the pot-bellied stove", tries to frighten them by conjuring a terrible image of Hell. We can imagine what kind of fantasies about tortures for those lawyers he has in mind.

The following joke shows how some "lucky" lawyers might be "tortured" in Hell:

A man was sent to Hell for his sins.

As he was being taken to his place of eternal torment, he saw a lawyer making passionate love to a beautiful woman.

"What a rip-off," the man muttered. "I have to roast for all eternity, and that lawyer gets to spend it with a beautiful woman."

Jabbing the man with his pitchfork, the escorting Satan snarled: "Who are you to question that woman's punishment?"<sup>199</sup>

While the beautiful woman in the joke above is being punished for some terrible sin (maybe for adultery or for promiscuity?!) by having to suffer eternal torment – to have sexual intercourse with a lawyer, such punishment, however, might be quite a delight and not a torture for the lawyer [sic!]. Naturally, if tortures like this are to be expected by lawyers in Hell for their sins, no wonder they commit so many of them (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 2). The joke's message expressed in its punchline ("Who are you to question that woman's punishment?") is: there's no worse punishment (eternal torment) imaginable for a person than having a lawyer make passionate love to them.

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<sup>198</sup> <http://www.lectlaw.com/files/fun09.htm>

<sup>199</sup> <http://www.lectlaw.com/files/fun09.htm>

### 5.3. Allusion to Hell

**Some jokes might simply allude to Hell**, without mentioning the word. Although the scene of the following joke is a hospital ward and not Hell, and it could have been quoted and analyzed in Chapter 2, nevertheless it might be proper to quote and analyze it here:

As the lawyer woke up after surgery, he asked, ‘Why are all the blinds drawn?’

The nurse answered, “There’s a big fire across the street, and we didn’t want you to think the operation was a failure.”<sup>200</sup>

The lawyer waking up after an operation is surprised to see the blinds are drawn. At first we might not understand why the nurse would care about the big fire outside, as well as its relevance to the patient. The nurse’s answer, however, alludes to a popular belief that for their numerous sins, after death, lawyers go to Hell. And since lawyers themselves, more so than representatives of any other profession, know this, or at least suspect it, if upon waking the patient were to see the huge flames, he’d think he’d died. Thus, proper precautions have been made by the nurse, i.e., the blinds have been drawn. Although a great number of American jokes demonstrate the permanent antagonism between lawyers and doctors (as well as other medical professionals, including nurses and medical researchers), in this joke, on the one hand, the thoughtful nurse tries to save her patient’s life, and on the other hand, her answer, in a hidden form, still shows a popular belief that Hell is the place where lawyers go after they die. Thus, this joke pours more oil on the fire of hatred and scorn directed towards lawyers.

According to a number of American lawyer jokes, lawyers associate with the Devil. They are even frequently called “Devil’s advocates”, as in the titles of the book “Devil’s Advocates: The Unnatural History of Lawyers” (Roth & Roth 1989), of the article “The Lawyer as Devil’s Advocate” (Bander 1993), or of the movie “The Devil’s Advocate” (1997, directed by Taylor Hackford). Some law

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<sup>200</sup> <http://www.lawlaughs.com/hell/index.html>

firms even try to hook clients by using “The Devil’s Advocate” in their names, as the leading authority in the US on legal fees, “The Devil’s Advocate” has done.<sup>201</sup>

It would be very hard for God, in the following joke, to find a lawyer in Heaven, unless it’s a decent, honest lawyer from the last joke in the chapter (the category which hardly ever exists in jokes, see the first two chapters of this book):

God decided to take the devil to court and settle their differences once and for all. When Satan heard this, he laughed and said, “And where do you think you’re going to find a lawyer?”<sup>202</sup>

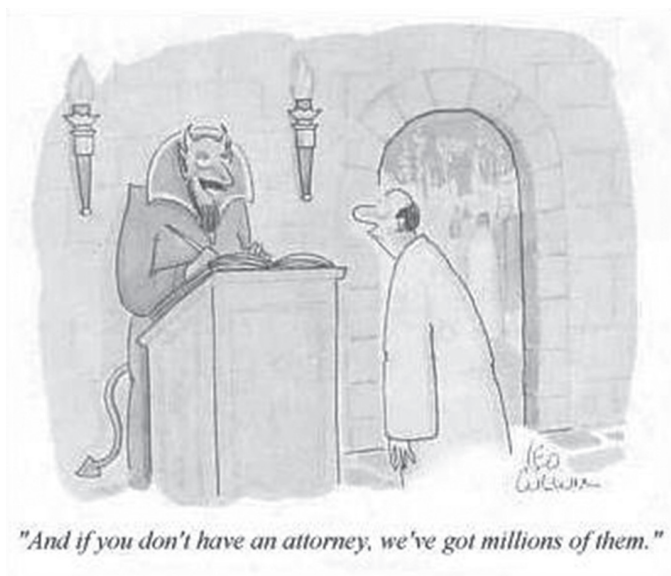


Illustration 29<sup>203</sup>

201 <http://www.devilsadvocate.com/indcouns.html>

202 <http://www.scroom.com/SCROOMtimes/Humor/Lawyer.shtml>

203 <http://www.swapmeetdave.com/Humor/Lawyer.htm> [Retrieved March 24, 2016]

## 5.4. Heaven

All jokes discussed above point out that lawyers normally don't enter Heaven: after death they go to Hell. The exception, however, might only prove the rule. Let me finish this chapter with a joke about **the first lawyer who has ever entered Heaven**. It might be symbolic that the lawyer in the joke is accompanied by the Pope (a number of jokes treating lawyers brought out together with priests have already been discussed in Chapter 2):

Following a distinguished legal career, a man arrived at the Gates of Heaven, accompanied by the Pope, who had the misfortune to expire on the same day. The Pope was greeted first by St. Peter, who escorted him to his quarters. The room was somewhat shabby and small, similar to that found in a low grade Motel 6 type establishment.

The lawyer was then taken to his room, which was a palatial suite including a private swimming pool, a garden, and a terrace overlooking the Gates. The attorney was somewhat taken aback, and told St. Peter, "I'm really quite surprised at these rooms, seeing as how the Pope was given such small accommodations."

St. Peter replied, "We have over a hundred Popes here, and we're really very bored with them. We've never had a lawyer."<sup>204</sup>

Undoubtedly, all decent lawyers who might gain entry into Heaven would be treated by St. Peter with similar respect, except, this particular lawyer seems to be one of a kind.

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<sup>204</sup> <http://www.kinseylaw.com/JOKES/jokes.html>



## **Conclusion**

This chapter has made an attempt to answer the following question: What awaits lawyers after their death, according to American lawyers jokes? It has been illustrated that the attorneys' numerous sins discussed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 of this book contribute to the existence of quite a large body of jokes about Hell as fairly conventional setting lawyers after they die. As we have explored, although quite a number of lawyers go to the entrance gates to Heaven and try to negotiate and argue with St. Peter, only very few of them are accepted to Heaven. The only exception who is lucky to enter Heaven just proves the rule, and is carried in St. Peter's hands, and is given "a palatial suite including a private swimming pool, a garden, and a terrace overlooking the Gates."

We have come to the end of the last chapter of Part I.  
Now let us proceed to Part II.



# PART II



## INTRODUCTION

Proverbs have never been considered sacrosanct; on the contrary, they have frequently been used as satirical, ironic or humorous comments on a given situation. For centuries, proverbs have provided a framework for endless transformation. In the last few decades they have been perverted and parodied so extensively that their variations have sometimes been heard more often than their original forms. Wolfgang Mieder has coined the term “*Antispruchwort*” (*anti-proverb*) for such deliberate proverb innovations (also known as *alterations*, *parodies*, *transformations*, *variations*, *wisecracks*, *mutations*, or *fractured proverbs*) and has published several collections of anti-proverbs in German and English (see the general discussion of the genre of anti-proverbs in Mieder 2004, 2007b; T. Litovkina 2005; 2007b; 2015; T. Litovkina & Mieder 2006: 1–54).

It should be noted that some anti-proverbs question the truth of a proverb through recourse to antonyms (*An exception disproves the rule* (A. C. Doyle, *The Sign of the Four*) {An exception proves the rule}), transforming the proverb into its opposite (*A friend that isn't in need is a friend indeed* (Barbour 1963: 99 {A friend in need is a friend indeed}; *Crime pays – be a lawyer* (Nierenberg 1994: 555){Crime doesn't pay}) or posing a naive question (*Still waters run deep – but how can they run if they are still?* (Esar 1968: 856){Still waters run deep}; *If love is blind, how can there be love at first sight?* (Esar 1968: 491){Love is blind}). The vast majority of anti-proverbs, however, put the proverbial wisdom only partially into question, primarily by relating it to a particular context or thought in which the traditional wording does not fit (*Money isn't everything – but it's way ahead of what's in second place* (Metcalf 1993: 148) {Money isn't everything}). Typically, an anti-proverb will elicit humor only if the traditional proverb upon which it is based is also known, otherwise, the innovative strategy of communication based on the juxtaposition of the old with the “new” proverb is lost.

Anti-proverbs may contain revealing social comments (*American money talks in just about every foreign country* (McKenzie 1980: 343){Money talks};

*A condom a day keeps AIDS away* {An apple a day keeps the doctor away}), but they may also be based on mere wordplay or puns, and they may very often be generated solely for comedic purposes (*A fool and his monkey are soon parted* (Margo 1982){A fool and his money are soon parted}).

Like traditional gems of wisdom, anti-proverbs appear in a broad range of generic contexts, from personal letters to philosophical journals, from public lectures and sermons to songs, from science fiction to comics and cartoons (Mieder 1989, 2007b). Anti-proverbs are also found in great abundance on the Internet (Mieder 2007b), in advertising slogans (Mieder 1989, 2007b), in the titles of books and articles, and in magazine and newspaper headlines. They are commonly quoted in collections of puns, one-liners, toasts, wisecracks, quotations, aphorisms, maxims, quips, epigrams and graffiti (see the lists of bibliography in T. Litovkina 2005: 211–228; T. Litovkina & Mieder 2006: 349–357; Mieder & Tóthné Litovkina 1999: 246–254). There is no sphere of life where anti-proverbs are not in evidence. The anti-proverb, however, is not a new genre born in the era of mass media and the Internet (Mieder 2007b); rather, they are as old as proverbs themselves.

All's fair in love and war and the anti-proverb arena: There is hardly a topic that anti-proverbs do not address. As Mieder states, “Just as proverbs continue to comment on all levels and occurrences in our daily life, so do anti-proverbs react by means of alienating and shocking linguistic strategies to everything that surrounds us” (Mieder 1989: 244). Numerous texts of anti-proverbs are sexually oriented (for more on techniques of creating sexual proverb parodies and themes in sexual proverb variation, see T. Litovkina 2005: 87–99, 2011c; T. Litovkina & Mieder 2006: 26–29; Tóthné Litovkina 1999a, 1999b). Like traditional Anglo-American proverbs in general (e.g., *Women and dogs cause too much strife; Women are the devil's net; Women are the root of all evil*), many proverb parodies in our corpus are antifeminist and demeaning to women. (for more on women in Anglo-American anti-proverbs, see T. Litovkina 2005: 100–106; 2011d; T. Litovkina & Mieder 2006: 29–31).

Although proverb transformations arise in a variety of forms, several types stand out. There are a number of mechanisms of proverb variation (which are by no means mutually exclusive), e.g., replacing a single word; substituting two or more words; changing the second part of the proverb; adding a tail to the original text; adding literal interpretations; punning; word-repetition; melding two proverbs; word-order reversal, etc. (for types of proverb variation in Anglo-American anti-proverbs, see T. Litovkina 2005: 28–54; 2007a; for punning in Anglo-American anti-proverbs, see T. Litovkina 2005: 55–86, 2006, 2009c, 2009d).

Among the subjects frequently treated in Anglo-American proverb alterations are money and love, marriage and divorce, education and learning, alcohol and drugs, children and parents, taxes and friendship, God and religion, telephones, as well as cars and computers (for a more detailed analysis of themes treated in Anglo-American proverbs, see T. Litovkina 2005: 87–119; T. Litovkina & Mieder 2006: 17–26).

There is also a wide range of professions and occupations depicted in our material, e.g., teachers and doctors, babysitters and nurses, writers and actors, housewives and hairdressers, plumbers and workers (for more on professions and occupations addressed in Anglo-American anti-proverbs, see T. Litovkina 2005: 107–112; T. Litovkina & Mieder 2006: 31–33):

Those who can do; those who can't, teach; and those who can't do anything at all, teach the teachers. (Braude 1955: 132) {Those who can do; those who can't, teach}

Crime doesn't pay, except for the writers of detective stories. (Esar 1968: 194) {Crime doesn't pay}

All work and no play makes a housewife. (Esar 1968: 398) {All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy}.

Without a doubt, the lawyer is the most popular target of humor in Anglo-American anti-proverbs. The second occupation most frequently mocked in these anti-proverbs are, predictably, politicians, who receive almost the same

unflattering treatment as lawyers. After lawyers and politicians, doctors are among the most frequent targets for fun in the corpus of Anglo-American anti-proverbs (see T. Litovkina 2005: 107–112; T. Litovkina & Mieder 2006).

The following two chapters accordingly focus on the two most frequently mocked professions and occupations in our corpus of Anglo-American anti-proverbs, the figure of the lawyer and that of the politician. While the sixth chapter of this book treats stereotypical traits of lawyers in Anglo-American anti-proverbs, the seventh chapter addresses stereotypical traits of politicians in Anglo-American anti-proverbs.

The anti-proverbs discussed in these chapters were taken primarily from American and British written sources. The texts that follow, along with others too numerous to include, were drawn from hundreds of books and articles on puns, one-liners, toasts, wisecracks, quotations, aphorisms, maxims, quips, epigrams, and graffiti, and the vast majority of them can be found in two collections of Anglo-American anti-proverbs compiled by Wolfgang Mieder and Anna T. Litovkina (see Mieder & Tóthné Litovkina 1999; T. Litovkina & Mieder 2006).

While certain themes occur pervasively in anti-proverbs about lawyers and/or politicians, others appear in only a few. For this reason, my discussion may sometimes appear to be uneven and the treatment of certain thematic categories may seem to be disproportionately broad or narrow, but in all cases my examples reflect the proportions found in my source collections. It should also be mentioned here that a number of our anti-proverbs treat several thematic categories simultaneously. Such examples could be discussed in various sections of the following chapters. As a rule, anti-proverbs that embrace more than one theme will be quoted and discussed only once, except in cases in which very few anti-proverbs have been identified to illustrate a specific theme.

Although the two chapters below focus on anti-proverbs, in a few cases – in order to make a point, or to confirm or challenge some views expressed in



anti-proverbs – I could not resist the temptation to cite American jokes or other humorous texts, as well as quotes and epigrams addressing lawyers and politicians, or statements coming from the mouths of politicians, etc. (they are generally cited in notes with reference to their sources<sup>205</sup>).

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<sup>205</sup> The vast majority of these texts were downloaded from the Internet in the spring of 2009.

## CHAPTER 6

### Lawyers in American Anti-Proverbs<sup>206</sup>

*“I don’t remember having seen you before,” as the lawyer said to his conscience. (Wellerism, see Mieder & Kingsbury 1994: 117)*

#### The focus of the present chapter

The present chapter treats stereotypical traits of lawyers as found in Anglo-American anti-proverbs and proverbs. My discussion is organized into seven sections. While the first section examines American proverbs concerning law, lawsuits and lawyers<sup>207</sup>, the following six sections address stereotypical traits of lawyers as found in Anglo-American anti-proverbs. The second and third sections focus on the main stereotypical traits associated with lawyer in Anglo-American anti-proverbs: the cost of lawsuits, the high income (and fees) of lawyers, and their stinginess, greed and inordinate fondness for money. While the second section treats these themes in general, the third reflects how lawyers are portrayed in comparison with doctors and accountants. The focus of the fourth section is on lawyers’ ignorance and stupidity, and the fifth discusses features that seem to be indispensable to the profession of law such as lying, dishonesty, cleverness, and cunning, as well as the skillful ability to manipulate. The sixth section, portraying two special breeds of the legal profession – defense attorneys and those dealing with marital law – hones in on their main characteristics. Last but not least, the seventh section displays other stereotypical qualities of lawyers such as their feeding on the troubles, misfortunes and conflicts of others, as well as their fighting nature, toughness, arrogance, and on the like.

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206 An earlier, shorter, version of this chapter was published under the title *Where there’s a will there’s a lawyer’s bill”: Lawyers in Anglo-American anti-proverbs* (see T. Litovkina 2011b).

207 The proverbs quoted here were recorded in the USA in the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and can be found in “A Dictionary of American Proverbs” (see Mieder et al. 1992: 362–364).

## Discussion

### 6.1. American legal proverbs

Donald F. Bond noted that “Perhaps no profession has contributed more to our proverbial stock than the law” (Bond 1936: 935). Elsewhere he wrote: “The view of the law reflected in proverbs reveals the distrust of legal matters which the common man has long held. The dangers of becoming involved in law suits, the expense, the interminable progress of litigation, the uncertainty of justice – on all these points his instinct has been to steer clear. Similar lines – and equally unflattering – form the picture of the lawyer in proverbial lore” (Bond 1935: 725).

Let us first see how **law in general** is reflected in American proverbs. You should not do anything unlawful that might lead to you having to go to jail. It is better to observe the law, and not be involved in any legal procedure: *Keep the law and keep from the law*. Also, after a legal case has been launched, its outcome cannot be predicted, because there are so many entanglements: *To go to law is to go to sea*. ‘Law’ is also depicted as lacking a heart: *In a thousand pounds of law there is not one ounce of love*. Moreover, it justifies disorder and madness: *Law often codifies disorder and make madness legal*. People who don’t know that something is against the law can still be punished for their deed: *Ignorance of the law is no excuse*. This idea is contested in the following two proverbs: *Laws are made to be broken; Laws are made to be evaded*. Laws should not be too gentle, neither should they be too severe, since *Laws too gentle are seldom obeyed; too severe, seldom executed*. Where there are too many laws, there will be a lot of offenders, since there will be always a way to outsmart these laws: *The greater the number of laws, the more thieves there will be; The more laws, the more offenders*. By using money, and through corruption, one might turn the law in whichever direction is most expedient, as stated in the proverb, *The law is like an axle: you can turn it whichever way you please if you give it plenty of grease*. Justice is given to the rich, therefore, *There is one law for the rich and one for the poor; Who will have law, must have money*. While petty criminals are punished, big criminals are frequently allowed to go free: *Laws catch flies and let hornets*

go free. Someone in need might be forced to do illegal things: *Necessity knows no law; Where there is hunger law is not regarded, and where law is not regarded there will be hunger.* In times of misfortune, no one pays attention to the law, and is thus repeatedly broken; what's more, those who break the law are not punished: *Laws are silent when wars are waging.*

How is **the nature of the lawyer revealed in American proverbs**? A good attorney is seen as a very bad person: *A good lawyer, a bad neighbor.* Lawyers are pushy and arrogant: *Lawyers earn their bread in the sweat of their browbeating.* Attorneys' frequent task is to deal with dishonest people and criminals. In this vein, the following proverb emphasizes: *If there were no bad people, there would be no good lawyers.* Lawyers' ability to "change white into black" and reshape reality is emphasized in the proverb, *Lawyers, like painters, can easily change white into black.* Attorneys delay justice by focusing on technicalities and minute legal procedures. Instead of trying to reach harmony and timely resolution of their cases, they do anything possible in order to foment and prolong conflict. The better a lawyer, the longer his case can last, i.e., the more money he can make. Indeed, as the proverbs stress, *Lawsuits were invented to make lawyers rich; The longer the lawsuit, the larger the lawyer's fee.* The proverb *No matter who loses, the lawyer always wins* points out the 'win-win' situation of a lawsuit – for the attorney. In the best of cases, though, lawyers are not needed when laws speak: *The best government is that in which the law speaks instead of the lawyer.*

A few additional American proverbs about law, lawsuits and lawyers:

*A man who is his own lawyer has a fool for a client.*  
*Always tell your doctor and your lawyer the truth.*  
*Possession is nine points of the law.*  
*Lawmakers should not be lawbreakers.*  
*Where there's no law, there's no bread.*  
*Where law ends, tyranny begins.*  
*The execution of the laws is more important than the making of them.*  
*Fond of lawsuits, little wealth; fond of doctors, little health.*

*If one family has a lawsuit, ten families are involved.*

Now let us turn to the main focus of our discussion in this chapter, Anglo-American anti-proverbs that target lawyers, and let us examine the dominant traits of lawyers and their behavior as presented in these anti-proverbs.

## **6.2. “Practice does not make a lawyer perfect, but enough of it will make him rich”**

The greatest anger and irritation in Anglo-American anti-proverbs are directed at the **cost of lawsuits, the high income of lawyers, their fondness for money, and their greed:**

Time is money, especially when you’re talking to a lawyer or buying a commercial. (Frank Dane, in Lieberman 1984: 245) {Time is money}

Possession is nine points of the law, and lawyers’ fees are the other ninety-one points. (Esar 1968: 463) {Possession is nine points of the law}

Despite the fact that some attorneys do not attain professional competence and might not have enough legal experience, they still charge their clients a lot of money, and can make quite a good living:

Practice does not make a lawyer perfect, but enough of it will make him rich. (McKenzie 1980: 295) {Practice makes perfect}

Nowadays, the **fees of American lawyers (especially of those who are “high-powered”, “good”, or “first-class”) are incredibly high.** Not surprisingly, many Anglo-American anti-proverbs from our corpus treat this topic:

Ignorance of the law is no excuse, unless you can afford to hire a good lawyer. {Ignorance of the law is no excuse} (Esar 1968: 463)

After a man has had occasion to employ a first-class lawyer it is useless to tell him that talk is cheap. (T. B. & T. C. 1906: 75) {Talk is cheap}

An honest confession is not always good for the soul, but, in most cases, it's cheaper than hiring a high-powered lawyer. (McKenzie 1980: 101) {An honest confession is good for the soul}

Honesty is the best policy, because good lawyers come high. (Esar 1968: 465) {Honesty is the best policy}

These days **lawyers** are even called “**money grabbers**”. There is a belief that they put their hands in their clients' pockets, and try to empty them. They are especially good at prospering by their clients' death. This is why a diligent, hardworking person who, by accumulating wealth, contributes not only to the financial well-being of his heirs, but also to that of their lawyers:

Take care of the pennies and the dollars will take care of your heirs and their lawyers. (Esar 1952: 230) {Take care of the pennies and the dollars will take care of themselves}.

The numerous transformations of the proverb *Where there's a will, there's a way* express a similar idea. All the anti-proverbs below are based on different connotations of the noun “will”, for example, “the legal statement of a person's wishes concerning the disposal of his property after death”; as well as “the document containing this” (see Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary 1983: 2092), as indicated by the parodies below:

Where there's a will – there's a greedy solicitor getting in on the act.  
(Kilroy 1985: 205)

Where there's a will there's a lawyer's bill. (Safian 1967: 33)

Where there's a will, there's a lawsuit. (Wurdz 1904)

Where there's a will – there's a dissatisfied relative. (Safian 1967: 33)

Where there's a will, there's an inheritance tax. (Kandel 1976)

Where there's a will, there's a way – out for the lawyers. (Esar 1968: 870)

The popularity of the proverb, *Where there's a will, there's a way*, for homonymous punning (i.e. punning based on sound identity) may be explained by the existence of different meanings of the noun “will”. By seeing the words “dissatisfied relative,” “lawsuit,” “inheritance tax,” etc. introduced into the context of the transformations above, one has to reinterpret the original meaning of “will” from the proverb text and switch it to other connotations.



Illustration 30<sup>208</sup>

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208 [http://www.zazzle.co.uk/lawyers\\_if\\_at\\_first\\_you\\_dont\\_succeed\\_sue\\_again\\_postcard-239706892733779432](http://www.zazzle.co.uk/lawyers_if_at_first_you_dont_succeed_sue_again_postcard-239706892733779432) [Retrieved March 24, 2016]

### 6.3. “The lawyer agrees with the doctor that the best things in life are fees”

After lawyers and politicians, **doctors** are among the most frequently targeted professionals in my corpus of anti-proverbs. It is interesting to note that the most irritable qualities in doctors – ignorance and greediness – are identical to those in lawyers.

When Doctor Blake fell down a well and broke his collar bone, they said “You ought to heal the sick, and leave the well alone.” (Brown 1999: 7) {Let well enough alone}

What can’t be cured supports the doctor. (Esar 1968: 784) {What can’t be cured must be endured}

We have already discussed in Chapter 2 that in American lawyer jokes the lawyer frequently shows up simultaneously with his eternal rival, the doctor. Similarly, in Anglo-American anti-proverbs **the lawyer’s most frequent companion is his eternal rival, the doctor.**<sup>209</sup> The following anti-proverb deals with the theme of **lawyers and doctors’ greed, stinginess, and their fondness for money:**

The lawyer agrees with the doctor that the best things in life are fees.  
(McKenzie 1980: 396) {The best things in life are free}.

The proverb transformation above employs a special, though not infrequent technique of punning called paronomasia, one of the most popular techniques of eliciting humor in anti-proverbs: the word “free” is substituted by the word “fees”, which sounds and is spelled similarly but not identically (for more on punning in Anglo-American anti-proverbs, see T. Litovkina 2009c, 2009d), and is antonymous to “free”, thus completely negating the

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<sup>209</sup> Let me quote two epigrams bringing doctors and lawyers together:

Some men are in the hands of a doctor or lawyer all the time. (Ed Howe, in Esar 1968: 238)

Fond of doctors, little health; fond of lawyers, little wealth. (Esar 1968: 238)



meaning of the original proverb text (i.e. the most important things do not cost money and can't be bought for money).

In the following anti-proverb **lawyers, doctors and tax accountants** – the choice left to the “Jewish boy who can't stand the sight of blood and who stutters” (Dundes 1987: 124) from one of the jokes quoted in Chapter 2 – are shown as **formidable and greedy economic predators, unwilling to move without fees**:

Advice is cheap... except when you consult a doctor or lawyer or tax accountant. (Berman 1997: 5) {Advice is cheap}.

#### 6.4. “Necessity knows no law, and neither does the average lawyer”

The havoc created by an **ignorant lawyer** is also one of the commonest themes of Anglo-American anti-proverbs about lawyers. Observe the four examples below reworking a popular legal proverb of Latin origin [*Ignorantia iuris non excusat*], the proverb *Ignorance of the law is no excuse*. Our first example is in the form of a joke:

The judge interrupted proceedings to observe, “Ignorance of the law is no excuse in the eyes of the law.” “I should like to ask, Your Honor,” inquired the prosecuting attorney, “if your remarks are addressed to the defendant or to his lawyer?” (Esar 1945: 260)

If one can be punished for not being familiar with the law and, consequently, unwittingly breaking it, lawyers who are not familiar with the law are exempted from being punished for their ignorance of the law:

Lawyers are the only persons in whom ignorance of the law is not punished. (Jeremy Bentham, in Woods 1967: 158)

Moreover, they might even be rewarded (financially, by receiving their fees),

despite the fact that their poor counsel might even do harm to their client:  
Ignorance of the law excuses no man who retains poor counsel.  
(Prochnow 1955: 163)

The following text is in the same vein as the American proverb ***No matter who loses, the lawyer always wins***:

Ignorance of the law prevents a lawyer from winning your case, but not from collecting his fee. (Esar 1968: 464)

Both the proverb and the anti-proverb above target the ‘lose-lose’ situation of a lawsuit – for a client (that is, if a client loses a case, he gets nothing, since a claim bankrupts him; if, however, he wins, the situation is the same, and he gets nothing, since he has to pay his lawyer’s fees). Thus, lawyers always win, even if they are poor professionals, and are not sufficiently familiar with the law.

The three transformations of another proverb, *Necessity knows no law* (also of Latin origin {*Necessitas non habet [frangit] legem*}), also touch upon the ignorance of lawyers, and play on the meaning of ‘knows no law’ (i.e. *ignores* it). In the second and third texts lawyers are even sarcastically given a nickname<sup>210</sup> (“Necessity”, the first word of the original proverb):

Necessity knows no law, and neither does the average lawyer.  
(McKenzie 1980: 294)

As a student in law school, they called him “Necessity” because he knew no law. (Braude 1955: 220)

The trial had been proceeding for some time and everyone was

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210 Employing puns that play on personal names is a frequent technique of proverb transformation, e.g. *A Chicago man calls his sweetheart Revenge because she is so sweet {Revenge is sweet}* (for more on punning in Anglo-American anti-proverbs, see T. Litovkina 2009c; 2009d).

amused by one lawyer consistently referring to the opposing lawyer as “Mr. Necessity.” After awhile, the judge inquired, “May I ask, Mr. Jackson, why you always refer to learned counsel as ‘Mr. Necessity?’” “Simply, Your Honor,” was the reply, “because he knows no law.” (Esar 1945: 303)

In spite of the fact that the vast majority of anti-proverbs stress the cleverness, intelligence, and cunning of lawyers (dominant traits needed for lawyers; see the last section of this chapter), nevertheless, according to the following anti-proverb in the form of a wellerism<sup>211</sup>, some lawyers might be **stupid**. The fact that the cabbage-head is compared to the head of the lawyer speaks for itself:

“Two heads are better than one,” as the cabbage-head said to the lawyer. (Mieder & Kingsbury 1994: 59) {Two heads are better than one}.

### 6.5. “There’s honor among thieves – at least, until they begin to deal with lawyers”

Some of the most stereotypical traits of the legal profession in Anglo-American anti-proverbs are connected with **lying** and **dishonesty**. The anti-proverb below suggests that **honest lawyers simply don’t exist**, and therefore, lawyers should **never be trusted or relied upon**. In some anti-proverbs, lawyers are even depicted as less honest than thieves:

There’s honor among thieves – at least, until they begin to deal with

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211 Wellerisms, named for Charles Dickens’ character Samuel Weller, are particularly common in the U.S., Great Britain and Ireland. This form of folklore is normally made up of three parts: 1) a statement (which often consists of a proverb or proverbial phrase), 2) a speaker who makes this remark, and 3) a phrase that places the utterance into an unexpected, contrived situation. The meaning of the proverb is usually distorted by being placed into striking juxtaposition with the third part of the wellerism (for more on wellerisms, see Mieder & Kingsbury 1994).

lawyers. (Esar 1968: 393) {There's honor among thieves}.

We have already mentioned above that lawyers frequently represent dishonest clients, people who, in pursuit of money (or power, or fame, etc.) “help themselves” by breaking the law. As we know from experience as well as the proverb, *Evil communications corrupt good manners*:

Lawyers help those who help themselves. (Esar 1968: 465) {God helps those who help themselves}

If God helped those who help themselves, those who help themselves wouldn't have to hire expensive lawyers. (Leo Rosten, in Berman 1997: 162)

The two examples below even recommend that in order to save money, a person breaking the law should make an honest confession (obviously, not to a lawyer), so that it will not be necessary for him to hire a lawyer, which would force him to pay high fees:

An honest confession is not always good for the soul, but, in most cases, it's cheaper than hiring a high-powered lawyer. (McKenzie 1980: 101) {An honest confession is good for the soul}

Honesty is the best policy, because good lawyers come high. (Esar 1968: 465) {Honesty is the best policy}.

As can be seen from the two alterations above, making a clean breast of things and hiring a lawyer are perceived to be two contradictory things. Either you decide to be honest, or you employ a lawyer.

Other basic traits of people in the legal profession – **skillful ability to manipulate, as well as cleverness, cunning and slyness** – are presented sarcastically in the following anti-proverb:

Where there's a will, there's a way – out for the lawyers. (Esar 1968: 870) {Where there's a will, there's a way}.

The mutation above is also an example of one of the most dominant themes reigning in American lawyer jokes: “**The smart guy wins.**”

As has already been mentioned above, one of the tasks of lawyers (especially those who deal with criminal law) is to help people who are not conversant with the law, or those who do not respect the law, and therefore break it. The anti-proverb below stresses that good lawyers – for high payment – are ready to **falsify reality**, in order to ‘clear’ their clients and help them win their cases:

Ignorance of the law is no excuse, unless you can afford to hire a good lawyer. (Esar 1968: 463) {Ignorance of the law is no excuse}.



Funny Blue Tie for Attorneys

\$33.45

Illustration 31<sup>212</sup>

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212 <http://www.zazzle.com/lawyer+jokes+mens+clothing?pg=2> [Retrieved May 25, 2016]

## 6.6. “How to make crime pay: become a lawyer”

As we have seen from the examples quoted above, the overwhelming majority of Anglo-American anti-proverbs treating lawyers speak about them in general. Two special breeds of lawyers are, however, mentioned specifically in a number of our anti-proverbs: defense attorneys and lawyers who deal with marital law. Let us have a look at some representative examples.

Quite a few of anti-proverbs in our material deal with **criminal defense lawyers**, a breed of lawyer specializing in the defense of those charged with having committed a crime. While the original proverb *Crime does not pay* means that although crime may be profitable for a while, it will not pay in the long run, its transformations below express the opposite idea: crime does pay; what is more, it might pay very well, especially if you are a lawyer defending criminals:

How to make crime pay: become a lawyer. (Richards 2000)

Crime pays – be a lawyer. (Nierenberg 1994: 555)

The following joke, employing a punch-line in the form of a proverb, enlarges the criminal lawyer’s **ignorance and incompetence** to the extent that it **leads to his clients’ conviction, or even death sentence**):

A criminal lawyer whose clients, especially when tried for murder, were almost invariably convicted, boasted in the hearing of Montague Williams, “I have been forty years at the Bar, and I have never had a complaint about the way I have looked after my clients’ interests.” “That’s because dead men tell no tales,” retorted Williams. (Braude 1955: 219) {Dead men tell no tales}.

**Lawyers dealing with marital law** are brought up in the following proverb alterations. In the first one, the wife’s lawyer is familiar with all the shenanigans of the husband:

No man is a hero to his wife's lawyer. (Esar 1968: 382) {No man is a hero to his valet}

While the original proverb – *Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned* – emphasizes that no one is angrier than a woman who has been rejected in love or otherwise offended, the transformation below modifies the original text. **The fury is transposed upon her lawyer.** It is not surprising if we think of how much lawyers learn about the extra-marital affairs of their clients' spouses:

Hell hath no fury like the lawyer of a woman scorned. (Esar 1968: 32)

### 6.7. “Old female lawyers never die; they just lose their appeals”

After discussing the main stereotypical traits of the American lawyer as portrayed in anti-proverbs, in the last section of the chapter let us focus on a few more features that the anti-proverbs say lawyers possess. In these, one characteristic typically associated with the legal profession is the observation that **lawyers feed on the troubles, misfortunes, and conflicts** of others:

Necessity knows no law, but it is intimately acquainted with many lawyers. (Mieder et al. 1992: 363) {Necessity knows no law}.

The proverb transformations below and an American proverb *Lawsuits were invented to make lawyers rich* also support this statement:

Clothes make the man, and suits make the lawyer. (Esar 1968: 780)  
{Clothes make the man}

It takes two to make a bargain... and a lawyer to write the contract.  
(Berman 1997: 21) {It takes two to make a bargain}.

The following text illustrates such stereotypic traits of a lawyer as their **belligerent nature, toughness, and arrogance**:

In court, wrangling between lawyers is nine points of the law. (Esar 1968: 186) {Possession is nine points of the law}.

However tough **lawyers** are, they **can't always win their suits**, despite the fact that one of the dominant themes of anti-proverbs about lawyers, similarly to American lawyer jokes, is “The smart guy wins”. The following proverb alteration – the only example in our corpus which emphasizes the female gender and the age of a lawyer – is a pun on an *appeal* submitted in court by lawyers and the *sex appeal* of ageing female lawyers (for more on women in Anglo-American anti-proverbs, see T. Litovkina 2011d):

Old female lawyers never die; they just lose their *appeals*. (Berman 1997: 379) {Old soldiers never die, they just fade away<sup>213</sup>}.

Another anti-proverb in the same mold – omitting the word “female” but most probably referring to it is: *Old lawyers never die, they just lose their appeal* (Metcalf 1993: 132). In order to understand ambivalent puns<sup>214</sup> (as in the cited examples) requires the ability to view one situation from two, or even more perspectives.

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213 The proverb *Old soldiers never die, they just fade away*, which generated the largest number of parodies in my corpus of Anglo-American anti-proverbs (79), has provided a template for ridiculing a wide range of other professions and occupations (e.g., accountants, politicians, physicians, salesmen, etc.):

Old accountants never die; they just lose their balance. (Anonymous 1965: 290)

Old physicians never die; they just lose their patients. (Berman 1997: 379)

Old postmen never die. They just lose their zip. (McKenzie 1980: 410)

Old salesmen never die—they just get out of commission. (McKenzie 1980: 458)

Good jokes never die; they only pass along. Example: The comedian's wife sued for divorce, claiming he tried to joke her to death. (Crosbie 1977: 182) (For more on the mutations of this proverb, see T. Litovkina & Mieder 2006: 244–248).

214 Let us view two more ambivalent puns from my data, both of which are mutations of the proverb *Old soldiers never die, they just fade away*. In both of the mutations the word “balls” may stay for two concepts: (1) a spherical object for use in a game or (2) testicles:

Old rugby players never die. They simply have their *balls* taken away. (Kilroy 1985: 361)

Old golfers never die, they just lose their *balls*. (Beck 2004: 36)



It has to be pointed out here – and this is not surprising at all – that the figure of the honest, trustworthy or kind attorney hardly ever appears in our material. A rare exception, however, just proves the rule. The following proverb variation points out: **Forget litigation** (going to court), don't bother with it, **unless your lawyer thinks you can win**. Otherwise, you're just wasting your time and money:

Let bygones be bygones...unless your lawyer thinks you have a good chance of winning a lawsuit. (Liu & Vasselli 1996) {Let bygones be bygones}.

The anti-proverb below stresses that we are better off without **lawyers**, since they're **trouble makers**, and it is an allusion to the proverb *Let sleeping dogs lie*, indicating that one should leave good enough alone:

Any time a lawyer is seen and not heard, it's a shame to wake him.<sup>215</sup>  
{Children should be seen and not heard}.

Let me finish this section with three more anti-proverbs honing in on the legal profession and some legal practices:

Just think of the endless litigation that will arise when the meek inherit the earth! (Esar 1968: 464) {Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth}

Look before you leap – into litigation. (Esar 1968: 464) {Look before you leap}

“Virtue in the middle,” as the man said, when sitting between two lawyers. (Mieder & Kingsbury 1994: 146) {Virtue in the middle}

Many more anti-proverbs addressing lawyers' character, behavior, and stereotypical traits could have been cited and analyzed in this chapter, but we have to draw the line somewhere.

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<sup>215</sup> [http://www.archelaus-cards.com/retail/?main\\_page=miscellany](http://www.archelaus-cards.com/retail/?main_page=miscellany)

OLD LAWYERS  
NEVER DIE  
THEY JUST LOSE  
THEIR BRIEFS

Illustration 32<sup>216</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter first examined American proverbs concerning law, lawsuits and lawyers. The main focus of the chapter has been on the most stereotypic traits of lawyers and their behavior as illustrated by some representative examples of Anglo-American anti-proverbs. As it has been demonstrated through a number of proverb transformations, people in general have a poor opinion of lawyers as a class. Indeed, the greatest anger and irritation are directed at the cost of lawsuits, the high income of lawyers, and their greed. Lawyers' ignorance and their skillful manipulation of their clients and the due process of law are also common themes. Lawyers are inveterate liars. Finally, the list of lawyers' vices encompasses a number of other negative qualities as well, including stupidity, aggression, cunning, and dishonesty. Lawyers most frequently appear in Anglo-American anti-proverbs together with doctors and accountants. Representatives of all three professions are portrayed as hungry in their pursuit of money. The present chapter has shown that, like traditional Anglo-American proverbs in general (for example, *A good lawyer, a bad neighbor; Lawyers, like painters, can easily change white into black; No matter who loses, the lawyer always wins*), the overwhelming majority of legal proverb parodies are also extremely demeaning to lawyers.

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216 <http://www.zazzle.co.uk/lawyer+joke+gifts> [Retrieved March 24, 2016]

## CHAPTER 7

### Politicians in American Anti-Proverbs<sup>217</sup>

*A Congressman in the USA was once asked about his attitude toward whiskey.*

*'If you mean the demon drink that poisons the mind, pollutes the body, desecrates family life, and inflames sinners, then I'm against it. But if you mean the elixir of Christmas cheer, the shield against winter chill, the taxable potion that puts needed funds into public coffers to comfort little crippled children, then I'm for it. This is my position, and I will not compromise.'*  
(Joke)<sup>218</sup>

#### The focus of the present chapter

The last chapter of the book addresses the second most popular occupation subjected to mockery in Anglo-American anti-proverbs, the profession of the politician. This chapter focuses on stereotypical traits of people in the political arena as reflected in Anglo-American anti-proverbs. My discussion is organized into six sections. While the first section makes an attempt to analyze two proverbs most frequently transformed in our corpus for political purposes, the next five sections focus on main stereotypical traits and features associated with politicians as seen in Anglo-American anti-proverbs. While the second section depicts politicians as a bad, immoral, wicked, sinful, or worthless, the third section shows them as greedy, hungry for money, and easily corrupted. The fourth section portrays politicians as inveterate liars and demagogues, and it demonstrates as well their dishonesty and lack of principles, as well as their skillful ability to manipulate people, falsify facts, and break promises. The focus of the fifth section is on their

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<sup>217</sup> An earlier, shorter version of this chapter was published under the title *Politicians in Anglo-American anti-proverbs* (see T. Litovkina 2013).

<sup>218</sup> [http://www.guy-sports.com/jokes/pub\\_jokes.htm](http://www.guy-sports.com/jokes/pub_jokes.htm)

foolishness, stupidity and ignorance. Last but not least, the sixth section gives an analysis of other stereotypical qualities of politicians as portrayed in anti-proverbs, such as the tendency to blame their own mistakes on others, their pushiness, arrogance, hypocrisy, high self-esteem, and so on.

## Discussion

The profession of the politician is the second most frequently parodied profession in Anglo-American anti-proverbs. The portrait of the stereotypical politician is based on laughable oppositions: His self-importance belies his professed selflessness, his claims of philanthropy mask his greed. The distance between the ideals he extols and the life of corruption that he leads makes the politician an ideal target for anti-proverbs. A *politician* is humorously defined by Ambrose Bierce in his *Devil's Dictionary* as: "An eel in the fundamental mud upon which the superstructure of organized society is reared. When he wriggles he mistakes the agitation of his tail for the trembling of the edifice. As compared with the statesman, he suffers the disadvantage of being alive" (Bierce 1960: 328). Bierce depicts *politics* as "A strife of interests masquerading as a contest of principles. The conduct of public affairs for private advantage" (Bierce 1960: 328). Let us continue our discussion with listing two straightforward definitions of the word *politician*. The Free Merriam-Webster Dictionary gives the following definition of the word *politician*:

- 1: a person experienced in the art or science of government; *especially*: one actively engaged in conducting the business of a government
- 2a: a person engaged in party politics as a profession; *b*: a person primarily interested in political office for selfish or other narrow usually short-sighted reasons.<sup>219</sup>

A number of senses of the word *politician* are given in the Oxford English Dictionary. According to sense 2b, applicable to the present chapter, a politician is defined as:

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<sup>219</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/politician>

A person who is keenly interested in practical politics, or who engages in party politics or political strife; now *spec.* one who is professionally involved in politics as the holder of or a candidate for an elected office. In the 17th and 18th centuries, usually with opprobrious overtones.<sup>220</sup>

### 7.1. Two most frequently parodied proverbs treating politics and politicians in our corpus

A number of proverbs in our corpus are transformed for political purposes. However, there are two proverbs which stand out in this regard, i.e. *Politics makes strange bedfellows*, and *You can fool some of the people all the time, all the people some of the time, but you can't fool all the people all the time*<sup>221</sup>, credited to Abraham Lincoln's *Speech at Bloomington* (1856) (see Mieder et al. 1992: 460). In this section let us discuss and exemplify these proverbs through some of their numerous transformations.

The first proverb, *Politics makes strange bedfellows*, addresses the issue of politics and politicians, and means that political interests can bring together people who otherwise dislike and avoid each other. A number of its alterations confirm the idea summarized in the original proverb text and treat the word *bedfellows* literally. The following two mutations of this proverb liken politics to courtship and marriage:

The bedfellows politics makes are never strange. It only seems that way to those who have not watched the courtship. (McKenzie 1980: 405)

Politics doesn't make strange bedfellows – marriage does. (Groucho Marx, in Esar 1968: 70).

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220 <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/146891?p=emailA1a8rjRgGMdNc&d=146891>

221 See the variant of this proverb: *You can fool all of the people part of the time and part of the people all the time, but you can't fool all the people all of the time* (see Mieder et al. 1992: 460).

The proverb-transformation below even draws a parallel between politics and prostitution:

Politics makes strange bedfellows, and so does prostitution. (Esar 1968: 642)

In Chapter 2 we have pointed out that a number of American legal jokes draw **parallels between the law and prostitution**, and we have also pointed to the features the two professions have in common. So it is not surprising that politicians and prostitutes should have a number of corresponding traits in common as well. While prostitutes sell their bodies, politicians sell their honesty, ethics loyalty, integrity, and principles. This resemblance between prostitution and politics is also pointed out in the words of the former president of the United States, Ronald Reagan:

It has been said that politics is the second oldest profession. I have learned that it bears a striking resemblance to the first. (Ronald Reagan).<sup>222</sup>

The coiner of our next mutation sees politicians as bad. The transformation employs the popular technique of proverb variation called paronymous punning. This a rare type of pun in which one word, with the change of a single phoneme, is split into two (*bedfellows* → *bad fellows*) (for discussion of paronymous punning, see T. Litovkina 2006; 2009c, 2009d):

Politics makes strange bad fellows. (Esar 1968: 616).

The incorporation of the word “lie” into the text of the anti-proverb below is naturally provoked by the word “bedfellows” from the original proverb text:

Politics makes strange bedfellows, but they are always willing to lie on their own side. (Esar 1968: 616)

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<sup>222</sup> <http://www.brainyquote.com/words/po/politics204495.html>

“Willing to lie on their own side” in the example above means that in accordance with the proverb *Charity begins at home*, politicians tend to take care of themselves and their own interests before taking care of anyone else’s outside their circle. Furthermore, this anti-proverb also plays on the double meaning of the word “lie”, thus, emphasizing one of the most typical features of politicians, their ability to lie (see section four). Not surprisingly, politicians don’t trust each other:

Politics makes strange bedfellows. That’s how learning to sleep with one eye was invented. (Safian 1967: 22)

According to the example above and the one below, even when these “bedfellows” seem to be each other’s allies, politics can easily disrupt a bond of loyalty between them. A good politician is a fair-weather friend who, as soon as he suspects that the stakes have changed and he sees a chance for profit will, without hesitation or remorse, turn his back on his allies and eagerly join the ranks of his foes. As one anti-proverb has it:

Politicians

Politics makes estranged bedfellows. (Safian 1967: 49)

The second proverb most frequently altered for political purposes in our corpus, *You can fool some of the people all the time, all the people some of the time, but you can’t fool all the people all the time*, means that misleading people has its limits. While the alterations of the proverb *Politics makes strange bedfellows* discussed above primarily support the meaning of the original text, the myriads of alterations of our second proverb most frequently argue with the meaning of the source proverb, emphasizing its opposite, namely, that that no holds are barred when it comes to politicians manipulating people.

In our first mutation the original proverb is simply reduced to its first part, thus making a contradictory statement:

The trouble with this country is that there are too many politicians who believe, with a conviction based on experience, that you can fool all of the people all of the time. (Franklin P. Adams<sup>223</sup>, Nods and Becks, 1944)<sup>224</sup>

The following two alterations show that even though politicians may not be tricky or sophisticated enough “to fool all the people all the time”, they are quite satisfied with doing so during a political campaign:

A clever politician knows that it isn't necessary to fool all the people all the time – just during the campaign. (Esar 1968: 110)

You can't fool all the people all the time, but politicians figure that once every four years is good enough. (McKenzie 1980: 154)

Three additional transformations of this proverb, while emphasizing the manipulative skills of politicians, point out that some are satisfied with fooling just “the majority” of voters:

Politician: A person who realizes you can't fool all the people all of the time, but is satisfied with a majority. (Prochnow & Prochnow 1964: 214)

You can't fool all the people all of the time, but the average politician is contented with a sizable majority. (Detroit News, in Prochnow 1955: 236)

Lincoln was right, of course; you can't fool all of the people all of the time; but you only have to fool a majority. (Columbia (S. C.) Record, in Lawson 1924: 141)

The contention of this proverb is contested again in our following anti-proverb which stresses that with proper advertising and a sizable budget, one “can fool all of the people all of the time”:

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223 Franklin P. Adams was an American journalist and radio personality (1881–1960).

224 <http://www.quotecounterquote.com/2010/01/you-can-fool-all-people-some-of-time.html>



You can fool all of the people all of the time if the advertising is right and the budget is big enough. (Joseph E. Levine<sup>225</sup>)<sup>226</sup>

Perhaps one of the most cynical transformations of this proverb is the following mutation offered by George W. Bush, the former President of the U.S., in one of the speeches:

You can fool some of the people all the time, and those are the ones you want to concentrate on. (spoken at a Washington dinner, March 2001) (George W. Bush)<sup>227</sup>

After discussing the two most frequently transformed proverbs treating politicians and politics, let us proceed in the following five sections to the main topic of our discussion, namely, the dominant stereotypical traits and features of a politician and his behavior as reflected in Anglo-American anti-proverbs.

## 7.2. “Ninety percent of the politicians give the other ten percent a bad reputation”

According to general opinion as reflected by the two quotes below, politicians more often than not are seen as **bad, immoral, wicked, sinful, and worthless**:

Ninety percent of the politicians give the other ten percent a bad reputation. (Henry Kissinger<sup>228</sup>)<sup>229</sup>

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225 Joseph E. Levine (1905–1987) was an American film producer.

226 [http://www.guy-sports.com/humor/jokes/jokes\\_politics.htm](http://www.guy-sports.com/humor/jokes/jokes_politics.htm)

227 <http://www.basicjokes.com/dquotes.php?cid=7>

228 Henry A. Kissinger (born 1923), a German-born American politician, political scientist, diplomat, and recipient of the Nobel Prize, played a dominant role in U.S. foreign policy, primarily between 1969 and 1977 in the administrations of Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, serving as National Security Advisor and Secretary of State. His opinion has been sought by many following U.S. presidents, as well as various world leaders.

229 [http://www.allgreatquotes.com/politician\\_quotes.shtml](http://www.allgreatquotes.com/politician_quotes.shtml)

A good politician is quite as unthinkable as an honest burglar. (H.L. Mencken<sup>230</sup>)<sup>231</sup>

Let us cite here some anti-proverbs:

Politics makes strange bad fellows. (Esar 1968: 616) {Politics makes strange bad fellows}

The good die young, but the bad live on and run for office. (Esar 1968: 109) {The good die young}

Every politician has his price, especially those who are worthless. (Esar 1968: 614) {Every man has his price}.

The anti-proverb below shows the dilemma many voters constantly have to deal with during political campaign when deciding who to vote for. Since there is frequently not a shadow of difference between candidates, the electors have to choose “between two evils”:

In politics the choice is constantly between two evils. (John Morley, in Lieberman 1984: 183) {Of two evils choose the lesser}

Indeed, according to Giorgio Agamben, constituted power is:

the product of a grey, incessant alchemy in which good and evil and, along with them, all the metals of traditional ethics reach their point of fusion. It thus becomes a question of irresponsibility and “impotentia iudicandi” [the inability to judge]...though one that is situated not beyond good and evil, but rather before.<sup>232</sup>

In line with this “grey, incessant alchemy”, one’s political preferences are not subject to objective scrutiny:

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230 H. L. Mencken (1880–1956) was an American social critic, journalist and humorist.

231 <http://www.basicjokes.com/dquotes.php?cid=7>

232 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political\\_power#cite\\_note-5](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_power#cite_note-5)

Political elections are a good deal like marriages – there’s no accounting for anyone’s taste. (Will Rogers, in Esar 1968: 261)  
{There’s no accounting for tastes}

What’s more, it doesn’t matter whom you elect, the result will basically be the same:

If voting changed anything, they’d make it illegal.<sup>233</sup>

And to add insult to injury, as the proverb transformation below points out, the less a candidate has to show for himself, the more likely he is to win an election:

In politics nothing succeeds like nothing. (Herbert V. Prochnow, in Prochnow 1955: 237) {Nothing succeeds like success}

What happens, however, when ‘poor’ voters have to choose between more than two “evils” – that is, bad candidates for public office? The following anti-proverb is an attempt to ponder this question:

When there are more than two candidates for public office, how are you to choose the lesser of two evils? (Esar 1968: 110) {Of two evils choose the lesser}

The following anti-proverb in the form of wellerism asserts that politicians are ready to associate with criminals:

“One good turn deserves another,” as the alderman said when he discharged the thief who voted for him. (Mieder & Kingsbury 1994: 143) {One good turn deserves another}

Whereas the proverb *Two wrongs don’t make a right* points out that an evil act can’t be corrected with another evil act, its transformation below

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233 <http://thejokes.co.uk/jokes-about-politicians-3.php>

expresses the idea that some politicians are ready to try with recourse to a third:

President Nixon's<sup>234</sup> motto was, if two wrongs don't make a right, try three. (Norman Cousins, in *The Daily Telegraph* 17 July 1979, in Rees 1999)

Similarly to the example above, the following quote addresses the opposition of the words "right" and "wrong" as well, and plays on the double meaning of the word "right":

Politics, it seems to me, for years, or all too long, has been concerned with right or left instead of right or wrong. (Richard Armour<sup>235</sup>)<sup>236</sup>

### 7.3. "With corrupt officials, money is the loot of all evil"

Even though the anti-proverb below points out that *Crime does not pay as well as politics*. (Alfred E. Newman)<sup>237</sup> {Crime does not pay}, scores of other anti-proverbs emphasize the opposite: **politicians make a lot of money**:

Politics makes strange bedfellows – rich. (Esar 1968: 615) {Politics makes strange bedfellows}.

Indeed, according to these proverb transformations, one of the main reasons why someone would like to become a politician, even despite the fact he/she might be unsuitable for a political career, is **greediness and hunger for money**, qualities typical of lawyers as evidenced by American anti-proverbs and jokes (see chapters 1–6). The transformation below, introducing the word "mayor" (the homophone of the word "mare" from the genuine proverb

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234 Due to his role in Watergate scandal, President Richard Nixon, to whom the anti-proverb above is sarcastically attributed, resigned from office in 1974.

235 Richard Armour was an American poet (1906–1989), the author of over sixty-five books.

236 <http://www.quoteagarden.com/politics.html>

237 [http://www.allgreatquotes.com/politician\\_quotes.shtml](http://www.allgreatquotes.com/politician_quotes.shtml)

text) into its context, claims that a mayor will do anything for money:

Money makes the mayor go. – Proverbs of Politics. (Wurdz 1904)  
{Money makes the mare go}.

Whenever any appropriate chance is given, politicians are ready to make a double profit from anything. Their endless vulturism and greediness are reflected in the anti-proverb below:

I once said cynically of a politician, “He’ll double-cross that bridge when he comes to it” (Oscar Levant<sup>238</sup>)<sup>239</sup> {Don’t cross the bridge till you come to it}

Given half a chance, politicians as well as governments will **take advantage of their position of power to pump you out of your money**, which is especially easy to do if you’re trusting, a situation famously exemplified by the following popular anti-proverb:

A fool and his money are soon parted – especially with the government to expedite matters. (McKenzie 1980: 187) {A fool and his money are soon parted}

Not surprisingly, the following pronouncement was born:

The word ‘politics’ is derived from the word ‘poly’, meaning ‘many’, and the word ‘ticks’, meaning ‘blood sucking parasites’. (Larry Hardiman)<sup>240</sup>

In fact, there seems to be no end to the financial shenanigans of politicians:

Give a politician a free hand and he will put it in your pocket.

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238 Oscar Levant was a popular American actor, pianist and composer (1906–1972).

239 <http://thinkexist.com/quotes/with/keyword/politician/3.html>

240 [http://www.allgreatquotes.com/politician\\_quotes.shtml](http://www.allgreatquotes.com/politician_quotes.shtml)

(McKenzie 1980: 401) {Give a man enough rope and he will hang himself}.

The easiest way to put politicians' hands in your pockets is allowing them to introduce new taxes. Here comes a joke exploiting the allusion to the proverb *Nothing is certain in this world but death and taxes* as a punchline. The joke was recorded more than 65 years ago, but nevertheless, how true its message is even today!

“Ah, me!” moaned Brown after he had had another disappointment. “Nothing is certain in this world but death and taxes.” “That’s true enough,” agreed Black, “but at least death doesn’t get worse every time Congress meets.” (Esar 1945: 442)

In the same vein, the proverb mutation below also addresses the everlasting topic of new tax bills introduced by governments:

The fellow who says there is nothing new under the sun never read a government tax bill. (Prochnow & Prochnow 1987: 292) {There is nothing new under the sun}

Not surprisingly, the politicians and, particularly, the government are seen as “money grabbers” in a number of our examples:

Behind every successful man is a wife who takes much of the credit, and a government that takes most of the cash. (Esar 1968: 116)  
{Behind every successful man there is a woman}

This is why reading the joke below, we are not surprised to witness that the mugger, after realizing that the well-dressed man whom he is about to rob happens to be a U.S. Congressman, easily changes the initial “Give me your money” into “give me MY money”:

Late one night in the Capitol City a mugger wearing a ski mask jumped into the path of a well-dressed man and stuck a gun in his ribs.

“Give me your money!” he demanded.

Indignant, the affluent man replied, “You can’t do this – I’m a U.S. Congressman!”

“In that case,” replied the robber, “give me MY money!”<sup>241</sup>

A number of our additional proverb innovations refer to the **corruption** of politicians. Before turning to some of these examples, let us have a look at how the word “corruption” is defined these days. According to the definition given by *Transparency International*, “Corruption is operationally defined as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain.”<sup>242</sup> *BusinessDictionary.com* gives us the following definition of the term “corruption”:

Wrongdoing on the part of an authority or powerful party through means that are illegitimate, immoral, or incompatible with ethical standards. Corruption often results from patronage and is associated with bribery.<sup>243</sup>

According to the proverb *Every man has his price*, everyone can be bribed, provided the bribe is big enough. Politicians – especially politicians who lack principles (a stereotypical trait of politicians according to these anti-proverbs) and whose goals in life are wealth, profit, power and fame – might be easy to corrupt:

Every politician has his price, especially those who are worthless.

(Esar 1968: 614) {Every man has his price}

With corrupt officials, money is the loot of all evil. (Esar 1968: 96)

{Money is the root of all evil}

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241 <http://www.physics.byu.edu/faculty/colton/personal/jokes/jokes-politicians.html>

242 [http://www.transparency.org/news\\_room/faq/corruption\\_faq](http://www.transparency.org/news_room/faq/corruption_faq)

243 <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/corruption.html>

Without sufficient campaign funds, how can one succeed in winning elections? Sometimes it might not really matter for a candidate where this money comes from, and whether it's ill-gotten gains or not:

If campaign money talks, it is careful not to tell where it came from.  
(Baltimore Sun, in Lawson 1924: 146) {Money talks}

Let us finish this section with a remark concerning the theme of corruption and campaign money:

The Court made an exception, however, in the case of candidates contributing to their own campaigns because of the rather reasonable presumption that a candidate is incapable of corrupting himself. (James L. Buckley<sup>244</sup>)<sup>245</sup>

#### **7.4. “Folk who don’t know why America is the Land of Promise should be here during an election campaign”**

Another frequently ridiculed trait of political leaders is **lying**. The word “lying” is even used explicitly in a number of anti-proverbs. Let us observe the following alteration of the proverb *Figures don’t lie*:

Figures don’t lie, except political figures. (Esar 1968: 307)

Whereas the “figures” in the traditional proverb refer only to numbers, the political “figures” in the anti-proverb above do lie, and presumably they can do it very well. Two question-answer jokes below also bring discredit to politicians, depicting them as liars<sup>246</sup>:

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244 James Lane Buckley (born 1923) is a retired judge for the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, who was famous for his successful challenging of the constitutionality of a law limiting campaign spending in Congressional races.

245 <http://www.basicjokes.com/dquotes.php?cid=7>

246 As we have discussed in Chapter 1, one of the most basic stereotypes of the lawyer is also lying.



Why do politicians envy ventriloquists? Because they can lie without moving their lips.<sup>247</sup>

What do you call a politician who swears to tell the truth? A liar.<sup>248</sup>

Politicians are also **people of smooth words and fair promises**, and they are well-known for **making promises they will not keep**:

A politician is known by the promises he doesn't keep. (Esar 1968: 639) {A man is known by the company he keeps}.

In the same vein, the candidate for office from the joke below confirms the truth of the proverb *It is one thing to promise, another to perform* when applied to political life:

The city election was coming up and the politician was out canvassing for votes. "I hope I'll be able to count upon your support," he said to one merchant he had called on. "I'm afraid not," was the reply. "You see, I've already promised my support to your opponent." The politician laughed. "In politics," he stated, "It is one thing to promise, another to perform." "Well, in that case," declared the merchant affably, "I'll be happy to give you my promise." (Esar 1945: 347)

When elected, politicians show their true colors, and more often than not, whether deliberately or not, they are unable to keep their promises. While during their political campaigns they promise the stars to their voters, after their victory the only thing they might be capable of is to make "molehills out of the mountains they erected" before the election:

After the election, the successful candidates start making molehills out of the mountains they erected. (Esar 1968: 261) {Don't make a mountain out of a molehill}

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247 <http://www.craziestjokes.com/funny-political-jokes.html>

248 <http://www.craziestjokes.com/funny-political-jokes.html>

This is why America is referred to as “the Land of Promise” in the following quote in which “the Land of Promise” has very different connotation from the one imbedded in the national ethos of the U.S., the promise of the chance for prosperity and success:

Folk who don't know why America is the Land of Promise should be here during an election campaign. (Milton Berle<sup>249</sup>)<sup>250</sup>

One such promise was the pledge *Read my lips: no new taxes* made by George H.W. Bush when he was a presidential nominee. When Bush accepted the nomination at the 1988 Republican National Convention in New Orleans (August 18, 1988), he said as follows:

And I'm the one who will not raise taxes. My opponent now says he'll raise them as a last resort, or a third resort. But when a politician talks like that, you know that's one resort he'll be checking into. My opponent, my opponent won't rule out raising taxes. But I will. And the Congress will push me to raise taxes and I'll say no. And they'll push, and I'll say no, and they'll push again, and I'll say, to them, '*Read my lips: no new taxes.*'<sup>251</sup>

”*Read my lips: no new taxes*” has become one of the most well-spread political catch phrases in the history of American elections. A consistent feature of Bush's 1986 election platform, it helped him win the 1988 presidential election. Taxes, however, had to be raised later in his presidency. This no-new-tax pledge, which Bush did not keep, was widely used against him by both the Republican Pat Buchanan during his primary election battle against Bush and his eventual opponent, Bill Clinton, who won the 1992 presidential campaign. The reference to the no-new-tax broken pledge has been a feature, direct or implied, of numerous jokes and cartoons ever since.

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249 Milton Berle was an American comedian and actor (1908–2002), one of the first major stars of U.S. television.

250 <http://www.basicjokes.com/dquotes.php?cid=7>

251 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Read\\_my\\_lips:\\_no\\_new\\_taxes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Read_my_lips:_no_new_taxes)

Let me illustrate this by the following joke, the punchline of which treats the euphemism 'bush' for pubic hair:

You know how Hillary Clinton has been giving political speeches everywhere? Well, she was getting ready to give another speech, and in preparation for it, she shaved off her pubic hair. The next day she was on the platform in front of a big crowd of people, and she gave her speech, at the end of which she raised her skirt and said, "Read my lips; NO MORE BUSH!" (Boulder, Colorado, 1992, in Preston 1994: 27)

In accordance with the well-known and frequently transformed proverb discussed in the first section, *You can fool some of the people all the time, all the people some of the time, but you can't fool all the people all the time*, some of the most stereotypical traits of the occupation of a politician as reflected in its mutual mutations are **skillful ability to manipulate, promise and persuade**. Politicians are also seen in our material as **demagogues**. A demagogue is humorously defined by H. L. Mencken, the 20th-century American social critic and humorist, as "one who will preach doctrines he knows to be untrue to men he knows to be idiots."<sup>252</sup> Demagogues are not only good at incorporating lies and falsehood into their speeches, but they also use this ability to manipulate and persuade their audience, manipulating them until they draw the conclusions he wants them to draw. Furthermore, demagogues may well believe their own arguments. In order to achieve their goals as well as to gain power and popularity, politicians also need to employ their best rhetorical skills, so that they can arouse the emotions, passions and prejudices they want to see in their uncritical listeners. A corollary of this trait is that a good politician **can talk endlessly about any subject**:

Brevity is a foreign word to any politician's vocabulary. (Liu & Vasselli 1996) {Brevity is the soul of wit}

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252 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demagogy>

In the same vein, the humorous statement below addresses the skillful ability of politicians to talk nonsense at the drop of a hat:

There are two sorts of politicians: those who can talk nonsense on any subject under the sun, and those who don't need a subject.<sup>253</sup>

Besides 'brevity', the words **honesty and principles are also “foreign words” to politicians’ vocabulary**, or so says our corpus. Even if some politicians are at least theoretically familiar with the meaning of honesty and principles, as soon as their own interests dictate, these are flung to the wind, and politicians do “what’s right”, meaning, what is the most rewarding and profitable for themselves. The politician in our example choses doing the ‘right’ thing over being ill-advisedly honest:

Honesty is the best policy, but, as a politician said, “there comes a time to put principle aside and do what’s right.” (Berman 1997: 193) {Honesty is the best policy}

Let us observe how politicians’ honesty and principles are looked upon in some quotes:

An honest politician is one who, when he is bought, will stay bought.  
(Simon Cameron<sup>254</sup>)<sup>255</sup>

Honesty in politics is much like oxygen. The higher up you go, the scarcer it becomes.<sup>256</sup>

To succeed in politics, it is often necessary to rise above your principles.<sup>257</sup>

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253 <http://thejokes.co.uk/jokes-about-politicians.php>

254 Simon Cameron (1799–1889) was a U.S. financier and politician and Secretary of War (1861–1862).

255 <http://www.basicjokes.com/dquotes.php?cid=7>

256 <http://thejokes.co.uk/jokes-about-politicians-2.php>

257 <http://www.basicjokes.com/dquotes.php?cid=7>

Some men change their party for the sake of their principles; others their principles for the sake of their party. (Winston Churchill)<sup>258</sup>

Politicians are also depicted as **disloyal**. As soon as their own interests demand, they are ready to turn their backs on any previous agreement without worrying about their given word. To quote former American president Harry S. Truman, who must have been familiar with the proverb *A dog is man's best friend*:

If you want a friend in Washington, get a dog. (Harry S. Truman)<sup>259</sup>

In order to satisfy public opinion and impress his potential voters, a 'good politician' is **ready to falsify or misinterpret facts**. While talking to different people, he may **change his views and opinions as fast as weather changes in April**. What's more, he does not feel the need to find an objective and truthful answer to a question. In order to demonstrate this view, let us observe two transformations of the proverb *There are two sides to every question* below:

There are two sides to every question, and a good politician takes both. (Esar 1968: 614)

There are two sides to every question, and to hold public office you have to be for both of them. (Prochnow 1985: 155)

It follows from the above that being a weather-cock and skillful demagogue, whenever a politician changes the direction of his sailing boat, he can always manipulate his surroundings into believing that he always sticks to his principles.

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258 <http://quotationsbook.com/quote/30901/#axzz1Nol55IN9>

259 [http://thinkexist.com/quotation/if\\_you\\_want\\_a\\_friend\\_in\\_washington-get\\_a/193651.html](http://thinkexist.com/quotation/if_you_want_a_friend_in_washington-get_a/193651.html)



Illustration 33<sup>260</sup>



Illustration 34<sup>261</sup>

260 <http://mrcapwebpage.com/VCSUSHISTORY/bushpresidency.html> [Retrieved April 17, 2011]

261 [http://www.cartoonstock.com/directory/r/read\\_my\\_lips.asp](http://www.cartoonstock.com/directory/r/read_my_lips.asp) [Retrieved April 17, 2011]

After three years, 30,000+ Iraqi deaths, 2300+ American deaths, impending civil war and a half trillion dollars . . .

**Read my lips !**



**"We are making real progress  
in the march of freedom."**

© unfairlybalanced.com

Illustration 35<sup>262</sup>

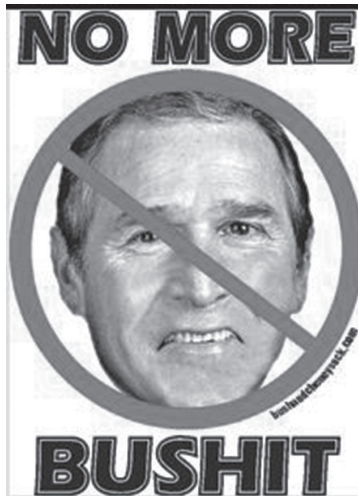


Illustration 36<sup>263</sup>

262 [http://www.allhatnocattle.net/3-16-06\\_mission\\_accomplished\\_part2.htm](http://www.allhatnocattle.net/3-16-06_mission_accomplished_part2.htm) [Retrieved April 17, 2011]

263 <http://bushandcheneyfuck.com/> [Retrieved May 12, 2016]

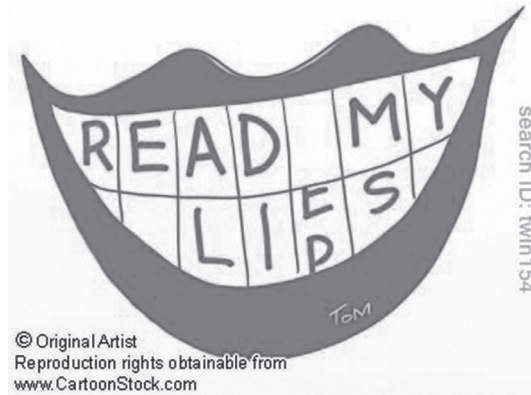


Illustration 37<sup>264</sup>

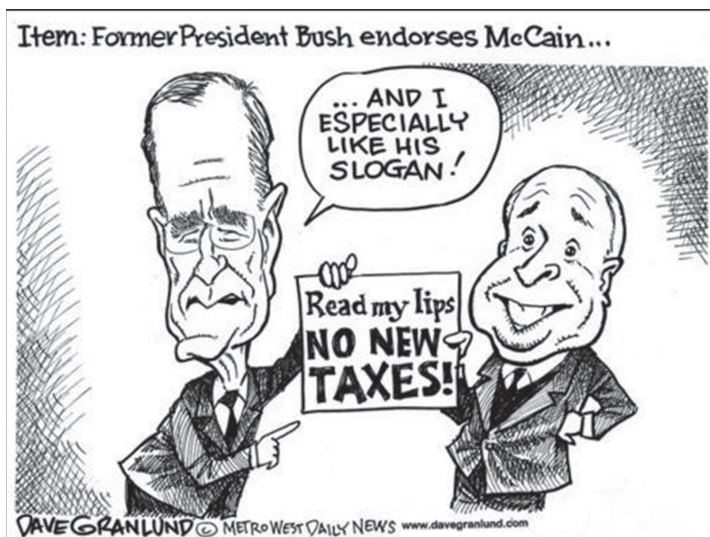


Illustration 38<sup>265</sup>

264 [http://www.cartoonstock.com/newscartoons/directory/r/read\\_my\\_lips.asp](http://www.cartoonstock.com/newscartoons/directory/r/read_my_lips.asp) [Retrieved April 17, 2011]

265 <https://www.google.hu/search?q=lawyer+humor&newwindow=1&espv=2&biw=1358&bih=649&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjwhdfl-HLAhXD3S wKHcUnBXIQsAQIGQ#newwindow=1&tbm=isch&q=%22read+my+lips+no+new+taxes%22&imgsrc=W-p9Gr-jzQhVWM%3A> [Retrieved May 12, 2016]



## 7.5. “Politics: An occupation where the blind lead the blind”

According to the parody of Descartes’ famous formulation *Cogito ergo sum* (*I think, therefore I am*), you either think or you’re a politician:

I think, therefore I’m not an MP.<sup>266</sup>

Even though the example above is aimed at British and not American politicians, a number of American politicians are depicted in our corpus as **lacking the ability to think**. As it is emphasized by two mutations of the proverb *You can lead a horse to the water, but you can’t make him drink*, cited below, being elected Congressman, not to mention President of the U.S. will not make a thinking person out of a dumb politician:

You can lead a man to Congress but you can’t make him think.  
(McKenzie 1980: 104)

You can elect the President to the White House, but you can’t make him think. (Liu & Vasselli 1996)

The truth of the anti-proverb just quoted is also reflected in the two quotes below:

To those of you who received honors, awards and distinctions, I say well done. And to the C students, I say you too may one day be president of the United States. (George W. Bush)<sup>267</sup>

When I was a boy I was told that anybody could become President; I’m beginning to believe it. (Clarence Darrow<sup>268</sup>)<sup>269</sup>

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266 <http://thejokes.co.uk/jokes-about-politicians-2.php>

267 <http://www.basicjokes.com/dquotes.php?aid=59>

268 Clarence Seward Darrow (1857–1938) was a famous American lawyer and civil libertarian, notable for his wit and agnosticism.

269 <http://www.quotegarden.com/politics.html>

As one of the greatest humorists of the first third of the twentieth century, Will Rogers<sup>270</sup> reflected:

There's no trick to being a humorist when you have the whole government working for you. (Will Rogers)<sup>271</sup>

Everything is changing. People are taking their comedians seriously and the politicians as a joke. (Will Rogers)<sup>272</sup>

Of course, it is no joke when a politician we can't take seriously wins an election:

The problem with political jokes is that they get elected. (Author unknown)<sup>273</sup>

To make matters worse, despite their **foolishness, stupidity** and **ignorance**, wealthy politicians and those who are able to garner sponsors for their political campaign have the highest chance of winning:

Walton's Law of Politics:

A fool and his money are soon elected. (Bloch 1990: 224) {A fool and his money are soon parted}.

As we know from the biblical proverb *When the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch* – that is, if a man lacking in understanding, knowledge or expertise attempts to guide an ignorant person like himself, both of them will suffer the consequences. The ignorant and stupid man from the anti-proverb below is a politician. The blind he leads are those whom he successfully manipulates, or “fools”:

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270 Will Rogers (1879–1935) was an American actor, humorist, comedian, and showman and one of the best-known celebrities in the 1920s and 1930s.

271 <http://www.basicjokes.com/dquotes.php?cid=7>

272 [http://www.allgreatquotes.com/politician\\_quotes.shtml](http://www.allgreatquotes.com/politician_quotes.shtml)

273 [http://www.allgreatquotes.com/politician\\_quotes.shtml](http://www.allgreatquotes.com/politician_quotes.shtml)

Politics: An occupation where the blind lead the blind. (Prochnow & Prochnow 1964: 216) {The blind leading the blind}

Stupidity, ignorance and complete lack of thinking are stereotypical features of politicians according to recent political jokes as well. As we learn from the text below, the extremely high price for a politician's brain is due to the fact that it has never been used:

A man went in for a brain transplant operation and was offered a choice of two brains by the surgeon.<sup>274</sup> He could choose either the Architect's brain which would cost him \$10,000 or the Politician's which was \$100,000.

"Does that mean that the politician's brain is much better than the Architect's?" exclaimed the clearly puzzled man.

"Not exactly," replied the surgeon, "the politician's has never been used."<sup>275</sup>

Ex U.S. president George W. Bush, whose figure has provoked the birth of thousands of jokes (see the numerous websites on the Internet), is the American president most lampooned for his stupidity and ignorance<sup>276</sup>:

When Einstein died and arrived at the gates of heaven, St. Peter wouldn't let him in until he proved his identity. Einstein scribbled out a couple of his equations, and was admitted into paradise.

And when Picasso died, St. Peter asked, "How do I know you're Picasso?"

Picasso sketched out a couple of his masterpieces. St. Peter was convinced and let him in.

When George W. Bush died, he went to heaven and met the man at the gates. "How can you prove to me you're George W. Bush?" St.

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274 A similar joke about lawyers' stupidity and ignorance can be found in Chapter 2.

275 <http://jokes4all.net/politicians.html>

276 Another quality of George W. Bush for which he has most frequently been ridiculed in jokes and other humorous texts is his lying.

Peter said.

Bush replied, "Well heck, I don't know."

St. Peter says, "Well, Albert Einstein showed me his equations and Picasso drew his famous pictures. What can you do to prove you're George W. Bush?"

Bush replies, "Who are Albert Einstein and Picasso?"

St. Peter says, "It must be you, George, c'mon on in."<sup>277</sup>

George W. Bush was also made fun of for his apparently fatuous statements, verbal peculiarities, slips of the tongue, and lapses, many of which were based on his ignorance, as well as numerous grammatical errors and syntactic ambiguities in his speeches. Such statements have been named "bushisms", and have become part of popular folklore, thanks in part to Youtube, as well as myriads of websites and books:

I know the human being and fish can coexist peacefully. (Saginaw, Mich., Sept. 29, 2000)<sup>278</sup>

I reads every chance I can gets.<sup>279</sup>

Rarely is the question asked: is our children learning?<sup>280</sup>

They underestimated me. (Bentonville, Ark., Nov. 6, 2000)<sup>281</sup>

For a century and a half now, America and Japan have formed one of the great and enduring alliances of modern times.<sup>282</sup>

I remember meeting a mother of a child who was abducted by the North Koreans right here in the Oval Office. (Washington, D.C., June 26, 2008)<sup>283</sup>

So long as I'm the president, my measure of success is victory – and success. (on Iraq, Washington, D.C., April 17, 2008)<sup>284</sup>

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277 [http://www.lotsofjokes.com/political\\_jokes\\_2.asp](http://www.lotsofjokes.com/political_jokes_2.asp)

278 <http://politicalhumor.about.com/od/bushquotes/a/dumbbushquotes.htm>

279 <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/bushism>

280 [http://www.guy-sports.com/virtual/politicians.htm#A\\_First:\\_A\\_Politician\\_Who\\_Laughs\\_at\\_Themselves](http://www.guy-sports.com/virtual/politicians.htm#A_First:_A_Politician_Who_Laughs_at_Themselves)

281 <http://politicalhumor.about.com/od/bushquotes/a/dumbbushquotes.htm>

282 [http://www.guy-sports.com/months/funny\\_bush\\_moments.htm](http://www.guy-sports.com/months/funny_bush_moments.htm)

283 <http://politicalhumor.about.com/library/blbushisms.htm>

284 <http://politicalhumor.about.com/library/blbushisms.htm>

The following remark alludes to the well-known proverb *Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me*, which George W. Bush apparently seemed to forget when he was delivering a speech. It could easily pass for an anti-proverb if only it had been coined on purpose:

There's an old saying in Tennessee – I know it's in Texas, probably in Tennessee – that says, fool me once, shame on – shame on you. Fool me – you can't get fooled again. (Nashville, Tenn., Sept. 17, 2002)<sup>285</sup>

Dan Quayle, who was Vice President<sup>286</sup> under President George H. W. Bush, was also famous for his ignorant and stupid political comments:

We have a firm commitment to NATO, we are a “part” of NATO. We have a firm commitment to Europe. We are a “part” of Europe.<sup>287</sup> Quite frankly, teachers are the only profession that teach our children.<sup>288</sup>

It is wonderful to be here in the great state of Chicago.<sup>289</sup>

I was recently on a tour of Latin America, and the only regret I have was that I didn't study Latin harder in school so I could converse with those people.<sup>290</sup>

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285 [http://politicalhumor.about.com/od/bushquotes/a/dumbbushquotes\\_3.htm](http://politicalhumor.about.com/od/bushquotes/a/dumbbushquotes_3.htm)

286 Dan Quayle served as Vice President of the U.S. between 1989–1993.

287 [http://www.guy-sports.com/virtual/politicians.htm#A\\_First:\\_A\\_Politician\\_Who\\_Laughs\\_at\\_Themselves](http://www.guy-sports.com/virtual/politicians.htm#A_First:_A_Politician_Who_Laughs_at_Themselves)

288 [http://www.guy-sports.com/virtual/politicians.htm#A\\_First:\\_A\\_Politician\\_Who\\_Laughs\\_at\\_Themselves](http://www.guy-sports.com/virtual/politicians.htm#A_First:_A_Politician_Who_Laughs_at_Themselves)

289 [http://www.guy-sports.com/virtual/politicians.htm#A\\_First:\\_A\\_Politician\\_Who\\_Laughs\\_at\\_Themselves](http://www.guy-sports.com/virtual/politicians.htm#A_First:_A_Politician_Who_Laughs_at_Themselves)

290 [http://www.guy-sports.com/virtual/politicians.htm#A\\_First:\\_A\\_Politician\\_Who\\_Laughs\\_at\\_Themselves](http://www.guy-sports.com/virtual/politicians.htm#A_First:_A_Politician_Who_Laughs_at_Themselves)

## 7.6. “The difference between ‘opportunity’ and a ‘politician’ is that opportunity knocks only once”

In the previous four sections we have focused on the main stereotypical traits of politicians as depicted in Anglo-American anti-proverbs. The last section of this chapter makes an attempt to discover some other qualities associated with politicians as presented in these anti-proverbs.

A stereotypical view of the **inability** of teachers expressed in the proverb *Those who can do; those who can't teach* is easily transferred in our corpus to the political candidates running for office:

Those who can't teach, administrate. Those who can't administrate, run for office. (Berman 1997: 401)

Indeed, there is a popular belief that only those who are **lazy, untalented, unskilled**, and **incapable of achieving success in their profession or occupation**, want to become politicians:

Be a politician; no training necessary. (Will Rogers)<sup>291</sup>

Politicians can easily **blame their own mistakes on others**, and they do so without feeling remorse:

To err is human; to blame it on someone else is politics. (Metcalf 1993: 166) {To err is human, to forgive divine}

It is particularly common to blame one's mistakes on the other party, as well as on one's political opponent:

To err is human, to blame it on the other party is politics. (Esar 1968: 615) {To err is human, to forgive divine}.

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<sup>291</sup> <http://thinkexist.com/quotes/with/keyword/politician/3.html>

It is also easy to blame one's errors or troubles on the previous administration. According to the following quote, only one politician in the course of American history has not done this – because he couldn't:

George Washington<sup>292</sup> is the only president who didn't blame the previous administration for his troubles.<sup>293</sup>

Among other stereotypical qualities attributed to politicians in our corpus are **arrogance** and **impudence**. Furthermore, politicians will do anything in order to get potential voters or achieve other aims with the **pushiness** typical of their occupation. Regardless of circumstances, whether appropriate or not, like door-to-door salesmen, politicians restlessly and impertinently (in both literal and metaphorical sense) “knock” at your door, and if they are rejected, they will make further attempts:

The difference between “opportunity” and a “politician” is that opportunity knocks only once. (Prochnow 1958: 304) {Opportunity knocks but once}.

Politicians are depicted as **hypocrites**, who profess beliefs, feelings, principles, or virtues they do not actually hold or possess:

Don't avoid politics because there are so many hypocrites – there's always room for one more. (Esar 1968: 616) {There's always room for one more}

In our examples, more than representatives of any other profession and occupation, politicians suggest that others should take their advice, even though they themselves act contrarily to it, very much in the spirit of the proverb *Do as I say not as I do*. In this regard, the portrait of politicians in our corpus shows a marked resemblance to the portrayal of clergymen

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<sup>292</sup> George Washington (1732–1799) served as the first President of the United States (1789–1797).

<sup>293</sup> <http://www.quotegarden.com/politics.html>

whose most stereotypical trait is hypocrisy.

In accordance with the saying *Any publicity is good publicity*, good politicians know the crucial **importance of publicity and good relationship with the press**. The truth of the proverb *Familiarity breeds contempt* is argued with in the following transformations:

In politics, familiarity breeds votes. (Esar 1968: 109)

A president likes to keep on good terms with the press corps because unfamiliarity breeds contempt. (Berman 1997: 132)

Politicians, however **old** they might be, **will run for office** again and again. Similarly to numerous anti-proverbs cited in this part of the book, the example below contains a homonymous pun: the “old bunk” (bunk bed as opposed to nonsense mixed with lying):

Politics makes strange bedfellows – because of voters’ affection for the same old bunk. (Safian 1967: 15) {Politics makes strange bedfellows}

Naturally, it is justified or not, politicians **have high self-esteem** and **self-confidence**, so they are convinced that they will be re-elected:

Another man who is convinced that history repeats itself is the candidate for re-election. (Esar 1968: 262) {History repeats itself}

If politicians had been wiser and, therefore, had paid more attention to the lessons history teaches us, the following anti-proverb – another transformation of the proverb *History repeats itself* – most probably would not have been coined, since it emphasizes the **reluctance of politicians to learn from the lessons of history and past experience**:

History wouldn’t repeat itself so often if statesmen would only listen. (Esar 1968: 764)



According to the general view of the public and in the opinion of scores of political jokes, politicians don't do anything. This might be one of the reasons why people of different professions and occupations (including the father from the joke above) run for office and dream of being elected:

Four years ago, my brother ran for state senator.

What does he do now?

Nothing. He got elected.<sup>294</sup>

Like a number of jokes, anti-proverbs about politicians also reflect the general view that a **politician's life** often seems easier, better, more comfortable, prestigious and successful than the lives of representatives of many other professions and occupations. It is sometimes presented as “**a bed of roses**,” and is, therefore, envied. However, in order to achieve their goals and make their own life “a bed of roses”, politicians **need to invent and employ the most sophisticated tricks**. According to the following anti-proverb, instead of making life a “bed of roses” (for us), politicians make it into “a bed of ruses”:

Politician: An individual who makes life a bed of ruses. (Prochnow & Prochnow 1964: 215)

The following mutation of the proverb *Life is not a bed of roses* below cynically and pathetically claims that contrary to general beliefs, **life is not always easy for a politician**, and might become quite a ‘hardship’ for the ‘poor’ man (!) who can never satisfy his electorate. Whether he really wants to do it or, being a hypocrite, just pretends to, remains to be seen. While literally the anti-proverb supports the idea expressed in the origin proverb, nevertheless, quite the opposite of it is implied:

A politician's life is no bed of roses. By the time he finds out what the people want, they want something else. (Prochnow 1955: 236)

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294 [http://www.guy-sports.com/humor/jokes/jokes\\_politics.htm](http://www.guy-sports.com/humor/jokes/jokes_politics.htm)

The following humorous text also emphasizes the ‘toughness’ of a political career, even though from another aspect, political leaders always attract people’s attention, and their reputation – rightly or wrongly – is perpetually ruined, either by unpleasant lies or unpleasant truths spread about them:

It’s tough being a politician. Half your reputation is ruined by lies the other half is ruined by the truth!<sup>295</sup>

A few further examples – all referring to themes addressing politicians or politics:

Next time a man tells you talk is cheap, ask him if he knows how much a session of Congress costs. (Esar 1968: 170) {Talk is cheap}

There are two sides to every political question, but only one office. (Esar 1968: 261) {There are two sides to every question}

As people do better, they start voting like Republicans – unless they have too much education and vote Democratic, which proves there can be too much of a good thing. (Karl Rove<sup>296</sup>)<sup>297</sup> {Too much of a good thing is worth more than none at all}

To the candidate running for re-election, all issues lead to the stream where horses must not be swapped in the middle of. (Esar 1968: 109) {Don’t swap horses in the middle of the stream}

A candidate is never as black as he is painted nor as white as he is whitewashed. (Esar 1968: 81) {The devil is not as black as he is painted}

Taking into consideration all the negative qualities and features attributed to politicians as seen in Anglo-American anti-proverbs, we should not be surprised to learn that **it is extremely hard to get rid of politicians**, and not only when they come knocking at your door again and again – a difficulty

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295 <http://thejokes.co.uk/jokes-about-politicians.php>

296 Karl Rove (b. 1950), a Republican, was Senior Advisor and Deputy Chief of Staff to former President George W. Bush in 2001–2007.

297 <http://www.basicjokes.com/dquotes.php?cid=7>

compounded if they are old, experienced, pushy, and possess the ability to manipulate people:

The good die young, but the bad live on and run for office. (Esar 1968: 109) {The good die young}

The proverb *Old soldiers never die, they just fade away*, which generated the largest number of parodies in my corpus of Anglo-American anti-proverbs and provided a template for ridiculing a wide range of various professions and occupations, has also been made use of to target politicians:

Old soldiers never die; they just run for political office, command huge lecture fees, or sign lucrative book deals. (Liu and Vasselli 1996)

Old politicians never die – they just run once too often. (McKenzie 1980: 401) {Old soldiers never die, they just fade away}.

A more radical expression of the same view of politicians is expressed below:

Politicians are like diapers.

They should be changed frequently, and for the same reason.<sup>298</sup>

To go a step further, if you don't want politicians to stink, you should not let them manipulate or fool you, which they do with abandon, if these anti-proverbs are anything to go by, and that includes "during the campaign." Otherwise, as the little boy from the joke cited below warns us, "the People are being ignored and the Future is in deep shit."

A little boy goes to his dad and asks, "What is politics?"

Dad says, "Well son, let me try to explain it this way: I'm the breadwinner of the family, so let's call me capitalism. Your Mom, she's the administrator of the money, so we'll call her the Government. We're here to take care of your needs, so we'll call you the people. The

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<sup>298</sup> <http://jokes4all.net/politicians.html>

nanny, we'll consider her the Working Class. And your baby brother, we'll call him the Future. Now, think about that and see if that makes sense." So the little boy goes off to bed thinking about what dad had said.

Later that night, he hears his baby brother crying, so he gets up to check on him. He finds that the baby has severely soiled his diaper. So the little boy goes to his parents' room and finds his mother sound asleep. Not wanting to wake her, he goes to the nanny's room. Finding the door locked, he peeks in the keyhole and sees his father in bed with the nanny. He gives up and goes back to bed. The next morning, the little boy says to his father, "Dad, I think I understand the concept of politics now." The father says, "Good son, tell me in your own words what you think politics is all about."

The little boy replies, "Well, while Capitalism is screwing the Working Class, the Government is sound asleep, the People are being ignored and the Future is in deep shit."<sup>299</sup>

Many more examples of anti-proverbs treating politicians, confirmed or challenged by jokes, humorous texts and quotes could be considered in the present chapter, but I must conclude now.

## Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the second most frequently parodied occupation in Anglo-American anti-proverbs (or proverb transformations), the occupation of politician. While in the first section two proverbs most frequently addressing politicians and politics in their transformations – *Politics makes strange bedfellows* and *You can fool some of the people all the time, all the people some of the time, but you can't fool all the people all the time* – have been discussed and exemplified, the focus of the following five sections has been the most stereotypic traits of politicians and their behavior. As it has been demonstrated through a number of proverb

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<sup>299</sup> [http://www.lotsofjokes.com/political\\_jokes\\_1.asp](http://www.lotsofjokes.com/political_jokes_1.asp)

transformations, and if we accept that these proverb transformations reflect the popular view, we can safely say that people in general have a poor opinion of politicians as a class. Indeed, politicians are ill-famed for not keeping their word, stepping down from agreements and breaking their promise. Great anger and irritation are directed at their all too eager pursuit of money, their greed and lack of principles. They virtually pump you out of your money. Politicians are inveterate liars and endlessly talking demagogues; they manipulate, mislead, and are dishonest by their very nature. This is why they are extremely hard to get rid of. Politicians are seen as bad, corrupted, worthless, and immoral. They frequently blame their own mistakes on others. Among other stereotypical features attributed to politicians are ignorance, stupidity and incompetence, as well as a lack of knowledge and expertise. Last but not least, politicians are portrayed as hypocritical and arrogant.

## CONCLUSION

The main aim of the book has been to analyze how stereotypical traits of lawyers and politicians as presented in Anglo-American jokes and anti-proverbs (or proverb transformations).

The first part of the book organized into five chapters has made an attempt to address American lawyer jokes.

As has been pointed out in Chapter 1 in our analysis of American lawyer jokes from the Internet, the greatest anger and irritation in the jokes is directed at the questionable nature of lawsuits, the inordinately high fees lawyers charge, as well as the greed and stinginess characteristic of their profession. According to the jokes, attorneys frequently bill their clients for services not rendered. To waggle more and more money out of their clients, lawyers deliberately try to delay justice by focusing on technicalities. Lawyers' ignorance, skillful manipulation, corruption and dishonesty are also common themes. Since lawyers are inveterate liars, they are not to be trusted under any circumstances. They take advantage of their own clients, and they take sexual advantage of them. They are pushy, arrogant and snobbish. They associate with the Devil. And these are only the most common stereotypical traits of lawyers ridiculed in American lawyer jokes found on the Internet. It comes as no surprise that people would like to get rid of them, to live in a world free of lawyers. The attorneys' sins discussed in Chapter 1 contribute to the existence of quite a large segment of jokes about Hell as the place lawyers end up in after they die. For their part, lawyers enjoy the fruit of their ill-gotten "gains" (money, respect, status, sex, power, etc.), while they are still alive.

Chapter 2 has addressed stereotypical traits of lawyers compared to those of representatives of other professions and occupations. Lawyers in our jokes are most frequently accompanied by their eternal rivals, the doctors, so it should come as no surprise that these two are very often depicted as being at odds. On the one hand, the texts quoted herein portray doctors as simple-

minded, honest, gullible, innocent, decent, naïve, and at times stupid, while on the other, lawyers are depicted as dishonest, sly, deceptive, and cunning. Still, though in the overwhelming majority of American lawyer jokes, the portraits of lawyers are much more unflattering than those of doctors, yet we cannot help but admire the former's inventiveness and cleverness. On the other hand, lawyers in our jokes are frequently compared to prostitutes, and not in favor of the lawyers, we might add. Priests are also among the professions and occupations most frequently brought up simultaneously in the jokes under scrutiny. Politicians are very rarely brought up in American lawyer jokes; however, there are a number of jokes about politicians which are very similar or even identical to the ones about lawyers. There are many other professions and occupations subjected to mockery in American lawyer jokes: e.g., mathematicians, economists, housewives, teachers, policemen, garbage collectors, janitors, architects, barbers, scientists, and many others. Still, in line with the saying that *The smart guy wins*, the lawyer generally outsmarts representatives of the other professions.

As we have shown in Chapter 3, a number of jokes draw parallels between lawyers and animals that in folk interpretation have negative, dirty, or threatening connotations and may even be associated in people's minds with aggression, war, and death (such as rats), or epitomes of predatory types, or scavengers (such as sharks, vultures and tigers), or symbols of slyness, deception and cunning (such as the snake and the fox), and many other ones (such as vultures, foxes, skunks, donkeys, bullfrogs, bulldogs, pit bull terriers, porcupines, donkeys and pigs).

Lawyers' extermination is a theme of one of the largest groups of American lawyer jokes, and also the theme of Chapter 4. Dozens of ways through which such extinction can be achieved have been demonstrated and exemplified, e.g., through burying alive, hitting by car or bus, drowning, running off a cliff, cutting, shooting, eating, using in medical experiments, and many others. We have also pointed out that what these jokes contain are not instructions for carnage; they provide a way for us to vicariously enjoy a world mercifully free of lawyers, and thus function like fairy tales for children.

Hell and the difficulty if not impossibility of gaining entrance to is a subject of another large group of American lawyer jokes, and is also the subject of Chapter 5 of the present book. And so, in vein with the American proverb *Until hell is full, no lawyer can be saved*, the place where lawyers do go after they die is Hell.

The second part of the book, divided into two chapters, has addressed the most frequently parodied professions in Anglo-American anti-proverbs (or proverb transformations), those of lawyers and politicians. We have explored that both politicians and lawyers, as reflected in Anglo-American anti-proverbs, have a number of traits in common. For instance, we have discovered that, similarly to jokes, the overwhelming majority of anti-proverbs are extremely demeaning to lawyers and politicians. Great anger and irritation are directed at their greed and mad pursuit for money. Both lawyers and politicians are seen as unprincipled, inveterate liars, cunning, manipulative and dishonest. The representatives of both occupations are also seen as bad, corrupt, and worthless. Finally, the list of their vices encompasses a number of other negative qualities as well, including stupidity, ignorance, aggression, arrogance, and hypocrisy. Although the last two chapters of the book have focused on anti-proverbs, in a number of cases – in order to make a point, or to confirm or challenge some statements expressed in anti-proverbs – American jokes or other humorous texts, as well as quotes addressing lawyers and politicians, have also been cited.

As it has been demonstrated in this book through a number of jokes and anti-proverbs, people have a poor opinion of both lawyers and politicians. It is not my task here to discuss if the stereotype of the lawyer or politician in Anglo-American jokes and anti-proverbs accurately portrays the traits and behavior of these professionals. As one of the leading American folklorists, the late Alan Dundes, pointed out in the late eighties:

In the United States, as elsewhere, individuals acquire stereotypes from folklore.... The stereotypes may or may not be accurate character analyses – they may or may not be in accord with actual, empirically



verifiable personality traits. The point is that folk stereotypes exist, and that countless people make judgments on the basis of them. There is probably no other area of folklore where the element of belief is more critical and potentially more dangerous, not only to self but to others. (Dundes 1987: 116)

Elsewhere in the same book, Dundes added: “Folklore does not create society; it only mirrors it. If the mirror image is unattractive, does it serve any purpose to break the mirror?” (Dundes 1987: 116). Edward J. Bander emphasized that “law reflects, rather than molds, society. If a society is mean, craven and litigious, it is not the lawyers that are responsible – they simply fill the vacuum that could be sweetness and light with a mean spirit and acts of vengeance” (Bander 1993: 178). And what about politics, an occupation which is dominated by lawyers in the U.S.? Does it not reflect the state of society as much as it molds it? An intriguing question of give and take, but one that is not within the scope or competence of this book on jokes and anti-proverbs to answer.

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