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Rhetoric 123  
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Stand-up Annotation

from Aziz Ansari: Right Now (Spike Jonze (filmmaker), 2019)

- (1) [C:A+] Thank you. Thank you very much! Thank you. Thanks. I appreciate that. Thank you so much. Take a seat. Take a seat. Thanks so much. Wow. What a nice welcome. [Squealing] Wow, wow, wow. Very excit... By the way, this guy's with me. [L] He's, uh... he's authorized. He's not, like, a very audacious bootlegger who really doesn't give a fuck. [L] "You said no phones, but what about full-on cameras?" [L] Uh... Yeah, we're filming these shows, so, you know, you might be in the show, uh, when it's on, whatever I put it on. You'll be like, "Oh, shit. I was there!" [L] But we're filming a few shows, so if you're, like, the shitty crowd, we won't use any of the footage. [L+, 1guy H]
- (2) Um... I'm psyched to be here. I-I've been on the road for a while. Um, I just got back to New York, uh, my home, {audible woo!} uh, a few days ago, and, uh, yeah. [C] I, uh... I was walking around the other day, and this guy, uh, came up to me on the street, and he was like, uh, "Hey, man. Love the Netflix show!" And I was like, "Oh, thanks so much." He was like, "Yeah, yeah, I really liked the episode you did on Supreme!" [L] I was like, "What? I didn't do no episode on Supreme." And then I quickly realized he's talking about Hasan Minhaj. [H] Patriot Act. Different show. Different guy. And he felt horrible, right? He immediately realized his mistake, and he was trying to buy it back. He was like, "Oh, no, no, Aziz, right?" I was like, {in increasing intensities of stadium-Aziz Ansari voice} "Yeah, yeah. That's me." [L-] "Master of None!" "Yeah, yeah. That's me." "Parks and Rec." {audible Woo} "Yeah, yeah. That's me." "Treat yo' self." "Yeah, yeah. That's me." [L-] "And, uh, you had that whole thing last year, sexual misconduct?" "No, no, no, no, no!" [L+: A-] That was Hasan." [L -> A-]
- (3) You know, I... I haven't said much about that whole thing, um, but I've talked about it on this tour, 'cause you're here, and it means a lot to me. [S] And I'm sure some of you are curious how I feel about that whole situation. And, uh, it's a tricky thing for me to answer, 'cause <backstage-guy nervous-strokes his beard> I've felt so many things in the last year, so... There's times I felt scared. There's times I felt humiliated. There's times I felt embarrassed. And ultimately, I just felt terrible that this person felt this way. And after a year or so<attentive listening>, I just hope it was a step forward. It moved things forward for me and made me think about a lot. I hope I've become a better person. And I always think about a conversation I had with one of my friends where he was like, "You know what, man? That whole thing made me think about every date I've ever been on." And I thought, "Wow. Well, that's pretty incredible. It's made not just me, but other people be more thoughtful, and that's a good thing." And that's how I feel about it. And I know... this isn't the most hilarious way to begin a comedy show. [L] But it's important to me that you know how I feel about that whole thing before we share this night together. [C -> L+]
- (4) Well, that was pretty intense. [W] What else shall we talk about? America? [...]

At a high level, Ansari's intro is (1) funny- -> (2) funny+ -> (3) serious -> (4) funny. And that is reflected by inspecting the distribution of laughs—and in its absence, attentive listening—throughout these sections. Ansari is expecting this cycle, and he's planning on using this rhythm to relay a serious part in the show, his response to a public account of his sexual misconduct, but must do it without destroying the comic space. I find section (2) very key in maintaining this space because he chooses to qualify his Aziz persona by making a joke that's threaded with his accomplishments and acknowledgements. He even stylizes his voice to a very classic Aziz Ansari (speaking personally) tenor, and then gets really quiet and serious for section (3). And it's the back and forth rhythm so the audience can stay on track and hit their cue to laugh hard at section (4)'s, "Well, that was pretty intense." This dance is a form of communication of boundaries between audience and stand-up.