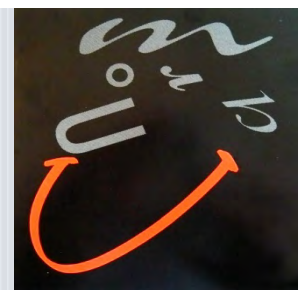


# The Humour Studies Digest

Australasian Humour Studies Network ([AHSN](http://ahsn.org.au))

April 2018



## **The 25<sup>th</sup> AHSN Conference – Call for Papers**

*The 25<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Australasian Humour Studies Network will take place from 6-8 February 2019 at RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia.*

Theme: "Humour in all its forms: on screen, on the page, on stage, on air, online ..."

Given this is the silver anniversary of the AHSN conference, the theme has a scope that enables a broad disciplinary engagement and recognition that humour manifests in myriad of ways, a number of which are still unfolding. We are keen to hear about humour in all its forms.

Information on transport and accommodation will be provided closer to the time via the [Events page](#) on the AHSN webpages at University of Sydney [<http://sydney.edu.au/humourstudies/>]. Other conference enquiries may be forwarded to [ahsnconference@gmail.com](mailto:ahsnconference@gmail.com)

### Submitting a Proposal

To submit a proposal for a paper, please send an abstract to [ahsnconference@gmail.com](mailto:ahsnconference@gmail.com)

Abstracts will be reviewed by at least two reviewers. Proposals for panels of three presentations on a specific topic are welcome. Proposals from research students are particularly encouraged, with postgraduate scholarships available to the first five to successfully complete the review process.

The Call for papers opens on **9 April 2018** and closes on **31 July 2018**. Successful applicants will be advised of review outcomes in order of submission and in all case by no later than **15 October 2018**. Please refer to the AHSN Guidelines for Presenters (below) and the Review Procedures of the AHSN which are posted on the AHSN website.

Presenters should also make sure they [subscribe to the free AHSN e-Newsletter \*The Humour Studies Digest\*](#) to ensure they receive all communications regarding the conference. For all other information about the AHSN and its activities, please visit: <http://sydney.edu.au/humourstudies/>

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# Guidelines for Presenters

## *Topics and Subject Matter*

Papers at AHSN conferences typically come from a very wide range of disciplines and should have a firm basis in Humour and/or Comedy Studies to ensure that they are not disadvantaged in the review process.

## *Abstracts*

Abstracts are limited to 500 words only including references (if required). Please do not use foot- or end-notes, and retain a dated copy for your own records.

## *Length of Presentation*

Papers are allocated 20 minutes for presentation and 10 minutes for discussion; pre-organised panels of 3 presentations are allocated 90 minutes; and practical workshops of 60 minutes are welcome. Please time your presentation and allow time for questions. Questions from AHSN delegates will come from a variety of disciplines and may give you valuable new perspectives on your project.

We look forward to seeing you in Melbourne next February!

## *The Conference Organising Committee*

- Dr Kerry Mullan, School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University
- Assoc. Prof. Craig Batty, School of Media and Communication, RMIT University
- Dr Sharon Andrews, School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University
- Ms Justine Sless, La Trobe University

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## **Change of Membership, AHSN Review Panel**

The recent 24<sup>th</sup> AHSN conference saw a change of baton in leadership of the AHSN Review Panel that keeps an eye on standards and planning for AHSN activities. Our founding Chair, Dr Bruce Findlay (Psychology, Swinburne University) stepped down to pass the baton to Dr Angus McLachlan (Psychology, Federation University of Australia, who convened the 23<sup>rd</sup> conference for the AHSN February 2017 conference in Ballarat). Happily, Bruce has agreed to stay on as a panel member.

Two other long-serving – indeed founding members – of the Panel also retired. At least for the present: Dr Rebecca Higgle, former Endeavour Fellow at the Centre for Comedy Research Studies, Brunel University London; and Dr Will Noonan, now lecturing in Anglophone Studies at l'Université de Bourgogne Franche-Comté in Dijon, France. Will is the founding Vice-President of a new francophone network of humour scholars, RIRH (Réseau interdisciplinaire de recherches sur l'humour – see story elsewhere in this Digest). While Rebecca is still publishing research, she is taking a break from academia. We take this opportunity to thank all three, Bruce, Rebecca and Will, for their dedicated contributions to the work of the AHSN.

In their place, two new members have been warmly welcomed onto the Review Panel: Professor Michael Haugh (Linguistics, University of Queensland) and Dr Kerry Mullan (Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University). We thank them both for being willing to serve and give especial thanks to Kerry, who together with other Melbourne-based colleagues, is convening the 25<sup>th</sup> AHSN Conference at RMIT University, 6-8 February 2019 (see Call for Papers elsewhere in this Digest).

The full list of the multi-disciplinary AHSN Review Panel is below (also on the AHSN website, where the review procedures for evaluating proposals for papers and workshops at AHSN conferences are also posted).

### **Health and Psychology**

- Dr Angus McLachlan (Chair of Review Panel)  
Psychology (Honorary), Federation University Australia
- Dr Bruce Findlay  
Psychology (Honorary), Swinburne University of Technology
- Adjunct Professor Carmen Moran  
Psychology, Charles Sturt University
- Dr David Rawlings  
Psychology, University of Melbourne

### **History and Social Sciences**

- Emeritus Scientia Professor Conal Condren FAHA FASSA  
Centre for the History of European Discourses, University of Queensland
- Dr Mark Rolfe  
Social Science & International Studies (Honorary), University of New South Wales

### **Linguistics**

- Dr Debra Aarons  
Linguistics, University of New South Wales
- Professor Michael Haugh  
Linguistics, University of Queensland
- Dr Kerry Mullan  
Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University

### **Literature and Humanities**

- Conjoint Professor Michael Ewans FAHA  
Humanities and Social Science, University of Newcastle
- Associate. Professor Peter Kirkpatrick  
English, University of Sydney
- Professor Robert Phiddian  
Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, Flinders University

### **Media and Cultural Studies**

- Dr Nicholas Holm  
English and Media Studies, Massey University
- Dr Michael Lloyd  
Social & Cultural Studies, Victoria University of Wellington
- Dr Jessica Milner Davis FRSN (AHSN Convenor)  
Literature, Art & Media (Honorary), University of Sydney

### **Visual Art and Practice**

- Mr Lindsay Foyle  
Cartoonist and Cartoon historian

*April 2018*

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## **AHSN Research Student Profile: Justine Sless**

Justine Sless is an award-winning writer, comedian and creative director of Melbourne Jewish Comedy Festival.

After more than a decade performing comedy in dark, dingy comedy rooms, performing solo shows nationally and internationally at festivals, events and conferences, creating the inaugural Melbourne Jewish Comedy Festival, blogging on the perils, pleasures and pitfalls of performing comedy and teaching comedy in a bid to understand the beguiling beast that is stand-up comedy, Sless found herself flummoxed most of the time and confounded the rest. So, she turned to academia for answers.

Sless is now undertaking a Masters by Research in Creative Writing at La Trobe University and her area of research is gender and comedy. Her research focuses on women performing live stand-up comedy in comedy venues in Melbourne and North-East England, and her creative response is a collection of short stories about gender and comedy.

Having presented a well-received paper at the 2018 Cairns AHSN Conference, Justine is delighted to be part of the organising committee for the 2019 AHSN conference, to be held in Melbourne at RMIT University [see Call elsewhere in this Digest]. She would be delighted to hear from anyone interested in either her research or the 2019 Conference.



*Justine Sless, Master of Arts (by Research), La Trobe University, Melbourne.*

*Mob: 0405 329 633*

*Web: [justinesless.com](http://justinesless.com)*

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## **Relocation and Draft Program – Colloquium on the work of John M. Clarke Sydney University, 25 May 2018**

Owing to travel difficulties, the Colloquium will not now take place in John Clarke's home town, but more conventionally over one day at the University of Sydney, in Seminar Room S226, John Woolley Building A20, University of Sydney.

John Clarke (1948-2017) was one of Australia's and New Zealand's most accomplished and most celebrated humourists. From his early performances as the iconic character, Fred Dagg, to his creation of one of Australia's most acclaimed screen comedies, *The Games* (1998-2000), and through his three decades of incisive comic interviews alongside Bryan Dawe, Clarke emerged as the pre-eminent antipodean political satirist, working across multiple media and formats. His influence was such that he did not simply embody the comic traditions of two nations but transformed and extended them. Clarke's comedy occupies a central place in the cultural landscape of both countries that he called home. One year after his untimely death in 2017, this colloquium will critically examine his life and work.

The accepted papers examine a range of aspects of Clarke's life and work, his relationship to comic and national traditions, his work across different media, and his role as a satirist, commentator and public figure. They will form a special 2019 issue of the *Journal of Comedy Studies* dedicated to Clarke's comedy

[<http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rcos20/current>] to be edited by Jessica Milner Davis and Robert Phiddian. The

program will be posted on the AHSN website closer to the date and emailed on request.

The Colloquium is free and open to all members and friends of the AHSN to attend but please email either Nick Holm or Jessica Milner Davis to indicate your interest in attending:

Nicholas Holm: [N.H.F.Holm@massey.ac.nz](mailto:N.H.F.Holm@massey.ac.nz)

Dr Jessica Milner Davis: [jessica.davis@sydney.edu.au](mailto:jessica.davis@sydney.edu.au)

### *Colloquium on the Satire of John Clarke - Draft Program (subject to alteration)*

**9.30 – 11.10**

Anne Pender, University of New England

*John Clarke: The man, the mask and the problem of acting*

#### **Abstract**

John Clarke hated acting. In a series of interviews, I conducted with him over several years, he told me more than once that he particularly loathed acting (in the realist and other senses of the term), and had never envisaged for himself a career as an actor. In particular the quaint traditions of the theatre repelled him, in spite of his admiration for the plays and playwrights themselves, in evidence in his propensity to quote Ibsen (and others) every now and then in conversations. Clarke's complex relationship to acting forms the subject of this paper.

As a young man, Clarke helped out as a stage manager at Victoria University because of the free beer, and at the last minute devised a sketch that would allow him to perform without anyone interfering with the piece. It was 1969 and it was clear to those in the audience that he seemed to have an instinct for emulating the distinctive rhythm, cadence and lexicon of New Zealand English, for parody, and a firm grip of comic timing. By 1971 he had launched the sheep farmer character on stage, Fred Dagg, who would soon make Clarke a household name in the medium that suited him best: television.

This paper examines the development of Clarke's unique approach to acting and his solution to the problem of establishing a direct connection with an audience through an analysis of key influences on his career, and his distinctive contribution to significant Australian television satire in *The Gillies Report* (1984), *The Games* (1998) and *Clarke and Dawe* (1989-2017). Drawing on numerous interviews I conducted with Clarke, this paper also investigates the ways in which Clarke prepared for comic performance, at various points in his career, specifically during his collaboration with Max Gillies for Gillies' stage show *A Night of National Reconciliation* (1983), in collaboration with Paul Cox on the feature film *Lonely Hearts* in 1982, and later as a mature and celebrated performer in his last role in the feature film *A Month of Sundays* (2015).

Nicholas Holm, Massey University

*"Fred, it's a mess" or the cultural politics of the laconic*

#### **Abstract**

Writing on "The New Zealand Sense of Humour" in the posthumously published *Tinkerings*, John Clarke describes the comic temperament of his country of birth as "laconic, under-stated and self-deprecating" (31). In his evocation of the laconic as a marker of national comic character, Clarke is far from alone: the term is frequently evoked as an easy, at-hand account of the comic characteristics of both Clarke's native New Zealand and Australia, where he found his later comic success. Indeed, Clarke himself could certainly be described as a master practitioner of the laconic tone, and it was central to his personal comic style that finds its echoes throughout contemporary New Zealand humour.



Yet the ease with which the term, laconic, is conjured belies the complexity of the comic forms to which it refers. While 'laconic' refers literally to the use of few words, it is not always clear how this definition informs laconic humour. This essay will explore how the laconic might be understood through an examination of the comedy of John Clarke, with particular reference to his Fred Dagg persona. I will argue that the laconic can be productively understood as opposed to Sianne Ngai's account of the "zany". Whereas the zany is frantic and intense—always seemingly on the edge of injury and mania, as in the comedy of Lucille Ball or Jim Carrey—the laconic is lackadaisical and indolent—not just in terms of the characters portrayed but also the formal composition of the text itself. Laconic characters ignore social conventions and explicit entreaties to care: laconic texts court aesthetic failure through a phlegmatic at best enactment of formal expectations. In many ways then, the laconic is a form of humour that *does not care*. However, while the comparison to Ngai's zaniness may suggest that the laconic can be understood as culturally resistant (Ngai argues that the zany is an aesthetic manifestation of the pressures of late capitalism), Clarke's use of laconic tone draws attention to its regressive elements: its association with a surly, conservative masculinity. In his performance of Fred Dagg, Clarke does not just enact the laconic, he also parodies it through Dagg's failure to adjust to or understand the stakes or rules of the world he inhabits. The laconic empowers Dagg—enabling him to mock powerful representatives of media and the state—but it also prevents him from fully understanding or engaging with his political and social environment.

### 11.10- 11.40 Morning Tea

#### 11.40-12.30

Marty Murphy, Australian Film, Television and Radio School and University of Western Sydney

*They can't all be winners: John Clarke and the "shabby suit crime comedy"*

#### Abstract

John Clarke adapted two crime novels by Shane Maloney for television, *Stiff* (2004) and *The Brush-off* (2004). For *Stiff*, Clarke directed as well as wrote the screenplay. Production was by Huntaway films, a company owned by him, together with *The Brush-off* director, Sam Neill and co-producer Jay Cassells. While these films do not match the famed Clarke and Dawe sketches (ABC TV) for satirical bite and artistry, arguably they are part of a "cluster" (Leger Grindon, 2011) of what might be called "the shabby suit crime comedy" genre. This article identifies a group of Australian comedies that share similar syntactic and semantic generic qualities (Altman, 1999) and includes *Gettin' Square* (2003); *Bad Eggs* (2003); *Stiff* and *The Brush-off* as well as *A Man's Gotta Do* (2004). It discusses the place in that group of Clarke's pieces and their techniques and artistic success.

### 12.30 - 1.30 Lunch

#### 1.30 - 3.10

Jessica Milner Davis, University of Sydney

*The bureaucracy of sport: John Clarke and The Games (1998; 2000)*

#### Abstract

Taboo topics in humour reflect local cultural conventions about things that are held to be so serious that it is not seemly to laugh at them. During the post-war decades in Australia, one topic held to be too sacred for mockery was sport. This barrier began to fall in the 1980s. The attack was arguably pioneered by John Clarke with reports expertly dissecting the ancient sport of farnarkling formed a regular part of the popular *Gillies Report* (ABC TV, 1984-5). Other contributions came from the cross-over from serious sports commentary to satirical send-up created by the Sydney-based duo, Rampaging Roy Slaven (John Doyle) and H. G. Nelson (Greig Pickhaver). Their expert

but irreverent radio commentaries on live matches began with *This Sporting Life* on Triple J (ABC youth radio) from 1986-2008 and on ABC TV from 1993, continued in their own ABC TV show *Club Buggery* (1995-7).

The approach of the Sydney millennial Olympics brought increasingly feverish preparations their staging which arguably increased the possibility of satirical critique aimed at the bureaucratic hype and posturing of self-appointed sports czars who draped themselves in the Olympic flag. The popularity of Roy and HG brought a commission (from Channel 7) to do a daily wrap-up commentary for each day of the actual events called, *The Dream with Roy and HG* (ABC TV, 2000), starring Fatso the Wombat as the Australian mascot. This played to bemused audiences around the world.

In the run-up to the Games, the ABC responded to the new-found sports scepticism by offering a series called simply *The Games* (ABC TV 1998; 2000), starring John Clarke, Bryan Dawe and Gina Riley. This full-fledged satirical critique of sport as just another bureaucratic construct effectively exposed the shady politics and inept institutional management of sport, both in Australia and more broadly. The present paper compares these artists' different perspectives and methods, examining structures and techniques. It aims to probe the connections between humorous creation, professional sport realities, audience awareness and cultural impact.

Lucien Leon, Australian National University

*Plus ça change: Three decades of Clarke and Dawe's political satire (1987-2017)*

### **Abstract**

Even the best broadcast satire tends to have a relatively short lifespan in Australia: after a couple of years or so the creators run out of ideas or the zeitgeist shifts and audiences and sponsors look elsewhere. Remarkably, John Clarke and Bryan Dawe's eponymous weekly political satire segment of Australian news media endured for thirty years before ending abruptly, a consequence of Clarke's sudden death in 2017. Originally framed in newsprint, Clarke's deadpan mock interview underwent its first evolutionary leap in media format in 1987 when he collaborated with Dawe to perform them as episodic radio scripts. A transition to television two years later established the show's definitive audio-visual format - one which later facilitated *Clarke & Dawe's* online success with the advent of Web 2.0 media.

Despite these radical changes in media form, *Clarke & Dawe's* satirical mechanics remained largely unchanged. In around two and a half minutes, an interview would deliver a revelatory and forensic dismantling of a complex topical - often political - concept or catch-phrase by mischievously but gently eviscerating its advocate. This paper outlines the durable structural format of Clarke's satiric creations and his deliberate cultivation of a recognisable and idiosyncratic approach, including tone, rhythm and delivery of speech. It then examines the impact of the different media potentialities (newsprint, radio, television and the Internet) on these and other formal aspects in order to investigate Clarke's lengthy popular success.

### **3.10-3.40 Afternoon tea**

#### **3.40 - 5.20**

Mark Rolfe, University of New South Wales

*Is this a Dagg which I see before me? The politics of John Clarke's political humour*

### **Abstract**

When John Clarke died, the media rushed to seek the opinions of politicians on his passing. Among the usual clichés about satire, politics and politicians came the intonation from Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull that he "spoke truth to power", lampooned "the absurdity of political life" and "with lethal accuracy...made politicians and prime ministers his prey". A former prime minister, Paul Keating, said

Clarke understood what politicians were “actually thinking” and stripped them of “humbug and cant”. A Greens senator mourned his loss: Clarke had kept him sane. Ironically, politicians were endorsing vehement anti-politics views, even though they are themselves the targets of such views

However, in understanding politics, Clarke was no dagg and did not simply wield a common and vicious dagger at politicians. In the view of that group, many humourists believe that the ideal of democracy is let down by knavish politicians. This outlook reflects the populist anti-politics strain of satire, particularly in America. Although Clarke was keenly aware of this watchdog role of the satirist in democracy, his work shows that he was alert to democracy’s complexities and common human frailties that can have us all acting foolishly in certain circumstances. In that regard, Clarke’s satire more resembles that of Armando Iannucci than, say, Jon Stewart’s. This paper will draw distinctions between the ‘fool’ and ‘knave’ versions of anti-politics satire.

Robert Phiddian, Flinders University

*John Clarke, poet*

### **Abstract**

Clarke’s poetic output was never the main game, but he was persistent in developing the (entirely self-authored) Complete Book of Australian Verse (39 poems in 1989) through two intermediate versions to culminate with the 2012 edition of the Even More Complete Book of Australian Verse (68 poems). Some of the poems are wonderful parodies that deserve (and will receive) detailed critical attention in their own right. However, the core argument of this paper will address the central characteristics of Clarke’s art through the parodic poems: voice, timing, rhythm.

The poems illustrate the sort of parody discussed in my ‘Are parody and deconstruction secretly the same thing?’ (New Literary History, 1996) and subsequent work. They seldom directly ridicule their literary or real world objects but, rather deconstruct by intimate imitation with distortion. They display a guarded, sometimes hostile affection and a jagged nostalgia both for the poetic vehicles and for the Australian subject matter.

As ever in his Australian work, Clarke inhabits the words of others, and speaks directly enough but only via parodic deflection. This contrasts with the Daggy directness of his New Zealand work, and raises a couple of questions: Was he only ever a visitor in Oz? Was the parodic reserve a necessary carapace against the sort of fame he fled in the 1970s? There’s a big difference between the voice of Dagg (rather Twain-like in its way) and the never-himself of Clarke’s Australian personae.

These questions can be posed but not definitively answered. This paper aims to read the poems as a window on the distinctive rhythms of his writing and his complexly ironic relationships with both his homeland and his adopted nation. His resistance of the voice direct gave him great purchase on Australian life as a wry and knowledgeable visitor. Perhaps the fantasised John Howard as eloquent father of national reconciliation in the ‘Sorry’ speech from The Games is a destination of these rhythms and their play of detachment. His voice offers a great and abiding challenge to Australianness, calling us to our better selves via parody.

### **5.20-6.10 Discussion (led by Moderator TBA)**

### **6.10-- Close**



## **The 2018 Cartoon Exhibition, Glen Eira, Melbourne, 3-22 April 2018**

### **“Cartoons Should Not Be Laughed At”**

*AHSN Review Panel member, pocket cartoonist and cartoon historian, Lindsay Foyle reports:*

“About a year ago I was asked to be involved in a joint exhibition of cartoons by Canadian and Australian cartoonists. It looked like it might be fun, so I said yes. The background was that both countries are influenced by the USA and that cartoonists in both compete with imported syndicated comics.

“All was going well until the Canadians pulled out, leaving us here in Australia with a gallery booked and only half the expected content (they might come back next year, maybe). I then undertook to gather as many cartoons as I could. Some are historical, some fresh off today’s computer. In the end there are 180 cartoons, by 145 cartoonists and each artist has a 100-word bio.

“As far as I know it is the biggest exhibition of cartoons ever mounted in Australia (but I’m not going to put any work into proving this claim, as I don’t want to discover I’m wrong!).

“The exhibition will be formally opened on April 4 at 6pm by Anthony Albanese at the Glen Eira City Council Gallery, Melbourne. It will stay open till April 22. It is free entry for anyone with a sense of humour and so should appeal to all AHSN members!”

Some highlights and dates are:

- Wednesday 4 April formal opening by Anthony Albanese at 6 pm
- Saturday 7 April (1 to 5) caricatures being drawn all day
- Sunday 8 April 2 pm Judy Horacek talk
- Thursday 12 April floor talk by Mark Knight and other cartoonists (noon)
- Sunday 15 April 2 pm Margret Gurney talk

The Catalogue includes biographical notes and a “Short History of the Australian Cartoonists’ Association”, all prepared by the Exhibition Curator, Lindsay Foyle.

Congratulations to Lindsay and his colleagues!

More details at: <http://www.gleneira.vic.gov.au/Places-and-events/Arts-and-Culture/Galleries-and-Visual-Art/Exhibitions/The-2018-Cartoon-Exhibition>



Volunteers work on mounting the 2018 Australian Cartooning exhibition, “Cartoons Should Not Be Laughed At”, showing about a quarter of the total area on display.

## Members' New Humour Studies Publications

Dita Svelte. 2017. "Do You Call this Thing a Coat?": Wit, the Epigram and the Detail in the Figure of the Ultimate Dandy, Beau Brummell, *Fashion Theory*, DOI: [10.1080/1362704X.2017.1354436](https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2017.1354436)

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## AHSN Member's Illustrated Public Lecture, Sydney, 10 April 2018

*Laughter Lines: The Legacy of Greek New Comedy*


AHSN member, Dr Alfred Vincent, Modern Greek Studies, University of Sydney, will present a lecture on the enduring legacy of ancient Greek comedy. This event is part of the 36<sup>th</sup> Sydney Greek Festival. For details, see the poster below with a still from a modern production of Markantonios Foskolos' *Fortounatos* (1655).

**LAUGHTER LINES:  
THE LEGACY OF GREEK NEW COMEDY**

A TALK BY ALFRED VINCENT

on Tuesday, 10 April,

at 7 pm at the Greek Community Club, 206-210 Lakemba Street,  
Lakemba



In the fourth century BCE, Athenian writers developed a new kind of comedy, whose most famous writer was Menander. Based on situations and characters from everyday urban life, the New Comedy left a legacy which was taken up by the writers of ancient Rome and the western Renaissance, and can still be seen today.

We will trace this legacy with Powerpoint slides and with examples (in translation) from plays by, among others, Menander, Plautus, Machiavelli and Shakespeare.

The talk will be in English.  
This is a free event and part of the 36th Greek Festival of Sydney.  
Everyone welcome!

# 2018 COMEDY AND POWER CONFERENCE

Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 9-10 November 2018

## Call for Papers

Keen to build upon the success of our 2017 event, “Mixed Bill” are back to create a space for discussion and action around comedy and marginalisation. The focus of our 2018 event, which will take place at Sheffield Hallam University on 9 and 10 November, will be comedy and power. This interdisciplinary conference will reflect on the role comedy has played in the fight for equal rights for under-represented groups and how the comic both informs and disrupts political debate. 100 years on from some women attaining the right to vote in the UK we still have a long way to go before equality is achieved for all. Can comedy play a role in the move towards a more equal society or does it hold us back?

This event will look back at historical examples of people using comedy to gain agency, as well as provide an opportunity for discussion about where comedy could take us next. In the wake of the high profile sexual harassment revelations in the US and UK (some of which directly relate to the comedy industry), and the continued gendered and racial pay gaps enacted by (amongst others) publicly funded broadcasters, how far is comedy a force for resistance or for upholding the status quo? How have activist movements such as Repeal the Eighth and Black Lives Matter engaged with comedy to make political points?

Comedy connects many different research areas including – performance, film and television studies, gender and queer studies, disability studies, post-colonial and Black studies, literature, sociology, visual arts and linguistics. We seek to include a broad range of disciplines and forms of comedy in the programme. All presentations, workshops and creative responses will be themed around the following areas.

1) Comedy = Power

(How minority and under-represented groups use comedy to gain power/ are empowered and achieve self-definition)

2) Comedy ≠ Power

(The limitations to using comedy to gain power or make political points – the temporary nature of carnival)

3) Comedy Vs Power

(How power structures and those in power are critiqued by/ through comedy)

4) Comedy + Power

(How those with power make use of comedy/ humour to maintain power/control)

We therefore welcome abstracts for 20-minute papers, creative responses or presentations and also 50-minute participatory workshops that connect to any of the stated themes. We are particularly keen to hear from anyone researching anti-racist comedy or instances where comedy has been used to maintain the marginalisation of people of colour.

Please submit abstracts by Monday 21 May. Abstracts should be 250 words maximum in a Word document (not a PDF), with minimal formatting. Please also include (in the same document), and as independent of this word count: name; email and postal address; title and affiliation(s); recent publications / creative outputs; any further relevant biographical information. Decisions to be communicated by 18 June. If you have any questions, please get in contact with the symposiums organisers.

- Ellie Tomsett (Sheffield Hallam University),
- Lisa Moore (University of Salford),

- Dr Kate Fox (University of Leeds),
- Natalie Diddams (Manchester Metropolitan University)
- Dr Suzanne Speidel (Sheffield Hallam University)

Email: [mixedbill@gmail.com](mailto:mixedbill@gmail.com)

Follow us on Twitter: @MixedBill

## Conference Reminders

ISS18, University of Wolverhampton,  
UK 2-7 July 2018

REMINDER for research students in humour and laughter: the next International Summer School on Humour and Laughter, ISS18, will take place at the University of Wolverhampton, Telford Campus, Shropshire, UK, from 2-7 July 2018. More information at: [www.humoursummerschool.org/18](http://www.humoursummerschool.org/18)

We look forward to seeing some of you there!

Regards from Willi, Josianne and Tracey

Willibald Ruch, University of Zurich, and co-organisers, Josiane Boutonnet and Tracey Platt, University of Wolverhampton.

30th ISHS Conference,  
Tallinn, Estonia, 25-29 June 2018

REMINDER: The fairytale capital of Estonia - Tallinn - will be the place to experience the magic of the 30th ISHS conference on "Humour: Positively(?) Transforming", 25-29 June 2018. This year's convener, Dr Liisi Laineste, was in Cairns at the 24th AHSN Conference to spread the word and is hoping for a good Australian and New Zealand participation. The call for papers, posters, special panels (90-180 min), workshops (90 min) and other academic formats (including panels of flash presentations, 5-7 mins each) related to humour research, has now closed, but contact Liisi for all enquiries or email: [ishsconference2018@gmail.com](mailto:ishsconference2018@gmail.com)

More information and registration: [www.folklore.ee/ishs2018/](http://www.folklore.ee/ishs2018/) Follow ISHS2018 on Facebook.

Conference Organisers:

- Liisi Laineste (Chair, Estonian Literary Museum; Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies);
- Piret Voolaid (Estonian Literary Museum; Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies);
- Mare Kõiva (Estonian Literary Museum; Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies);
- Aurika Meimre (Tallinn University); Carlo Cubero (Tallinn University);
- Anastasya Fiadotava (University of Tartu; Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies);
- Anne Ostrak (Estonian Literary Museum; Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies);
- Kristel Toom (Graduate School of Culture Studies and Arts; Tallinn University)

Conference sponsors:



## TACO – Taboo and the Media Conference

University of Bologna, 20-22 September 2018

Message from the Convenor – Extended Call:

Dear Humour Scholars,

This is to let you know that due to the low number of abstracts received by March 15th, the deadline for proposals is extended to April 15th.

Please see additional details at: <https://eventi.unibo.it/taboo-and-the-media-2018/call-for-papers>

Thank you very much and looking forward to welcoming people to the beautiful historic conference venue of the former Bishop's Palace in Bertinoro, Italy – September 20th-22nd, 2018.

Chiara

Prof. Chiara Bucaria  
Department of Interpretation and Translation (DIT)  
University of Bologna at Forlì  
Coordinator of the Taboo Conference Series

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## Successful Inaugural Conference for RIRH, the New Francophone Humour Studies Network

Report from AHSN Member and RIRH Vice-President, Will Noonan, in Dijon, France:

Réseau interdisciplinaire de recherches sur l'humour (RIRH) recently held its inaugural conference, organised by Marie Duret-Pujol (l'Université Bordeaux-Montaigne, Treasurer of RIRH) and Nelly Quéméner (Sorbonne-Nouvelle – Paris 3, Secretary of RIRH). Focusing on the theme of “Les scènes de l'humour”, it took place at l'Université Bordeaux-Montaigne on 22-23 March, in partnership with Bordeaux comedy festival, [Les fous du rire](#).

The conference program is available on the RIRH blog: <https://rirh.hypotheses.org/123#more-123> (maintained by Will Noonan, some pages in English as well as French).

RIRH hopes to hold a second event in Spring 2019, convened by Will Noonan at l'Université de Bourgogne Franche-Comté in Dijon on *Les langues de l'humour* (the languages of humour -- details to be announced later).

RIRH's founding President is Dr Yen-Mai Tran-Gervat (Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3). AHSN members will recall her invited seminar presented to the Dept. of French Studies and AHSN at University of Sydney last year on the topic of *Les «Humour Studies» en France: un point de vue et quelques réflexions* (*Humour Studies in France: The Situation and Some Perspectives*).

Eds: Congratulations, RIRH!



An inspired selfie of Dr Nelly Quéméner with RIRH members at the network's Inaugural Conference, 22-23 March 2018, Bordeaux.



## ***The Humour Studies Digest***

### ***The Australasian Humour Studies Network (AHSN)***

***'We put the "U" back into "HUMOUR"!'***

Send newsletter submissions to our Co-Editors:

Michael at [michael.meany@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:michael.meany@newcastle.edu.au) or Jessica at [jessica.davis@sydney.edu.au](mailto:jessica.davis@sydney.edu.au)

To subscribe or unsubscribe, visit the AHSN website (<http://www.sydney.edu.au/humourstudies>), click on "Subscribe to e-Newsletter" and follow the prompts to enter or remove an email address.