



AHSN Digest – July 2023

Conference Update on AHSN2024

University of Queensland 7-9 February 2024

Call for Papers Open and Conference Important Dates

The **30th AHSN Conference** will take place in-person from **7-9 February 2024 at the University of Queensland, Brisbane**. The Conference will begin early afternoon on Wednesday 7th February, enabling delegates from Aotearoa/New Zealand and interstate to travel to Brisbane that morning if they wish to do so.

The **Conference theme is “The Language of Humour”**. Language is one of the key means by which humour is accomplished across a whole range of different genres, ranging from everyday conversational humour through to political satire and literary humour. Language is also the primary vehicle for talking about and studying humour. The way in which humour varies across different languages also raises questions about how deal with the perennial problem of translating humour across cultures. Finally, the intersection of language with other visual and physical modalities also presents enormous challenges (and opportunities!) for scholars of humour.

Call for Papers

Presentations addressing any aspect of language (in the very broad sense of the word) and its relationship with humour are especially welcome for this conference. However, potential delegates should also note that, as usual with AHSN, papers focusing on any aspect of humour will be warmly welcomed.

Important Dates

Abstract submission portal opened: 26 June 2023

Deadline for submissions: 31 August 2023

Submission link: <https://ahsnhumourstudies.org/abstracts/>

Proposal guidelines

Proposals should be around 250-300 words in length. Please add a presentation title at the head of the abstract. References should be included if relevant. Members of the AHSN Review Panel

will check and review all submissions and may recommend changes and revisions to presenters. Once accepted, all conference abstracts will be published on the AHSN website and in the booklet of abstracts for the AHSN2024 conference. Review Procedures are described on the AHSN website at: <https://ahsnhumourstudies.org/annual-conference/>

Student scholarships

AHSN awards up to five conference registration fee-waiver scholarships for research students enrolled for study primarily at Australian and Aotearoa/New Zealand universities. These are awarded on the basis of merit of submitted abstracts, and students are thus encouraged to submit early to allow for any required revisions. Scholarships will be announced following the close of submissions on 1 October.

Registration for the Conference will open via the AHSN website on **1 September 2023**, with **Early Bird Registration closing on 1 December 2023**. All presenters and attendees including scholarship winners must register and pay the relevant fee. There are concession rates for students and the unwaged and a waiver-option for our scholarship winners. **General Registration will close on 31 January 2024**.

For more information and the abstract submission portal, please visit the AHSN website, where **accommodation and travel options** will shortly be available on the **Events-Annual Conference** page of the menu at: <https://ahsnhumourstudies.org/>

The AHSN2024 Committee looks forward to warmly welcoming you to Brisbane and the University of Queensland next February!

AHSN2024 Committee

Wei-Lin Melody Chang, UQ (co-convenor)

Michael Haugh, UQ (co-convenor)

Valeria Sinkeviciute, UQ (co-convenor)

Nick Hugman, UQ

Amir Sheikhan, UQ

Chantima Wangsomchok, UQ

Lara Weinglass, UQ & QUT

Editors: *For more details on our wonderful Organising Committee members, see the May 2023 issue of the AHSN Humour Studies Digest*



AHSN Member Wins 2023 ISHS DANYS Award

Alexander Sparrow, from Victoria University of Wellington, has won the International Society for Humor Studies 2023 Don and Alleen Nilsen Young Scholar Award. He writes:

As a first-time humour studies presenter at the 2023 AHSN conference in Sydney only this year, I was warmly welcomed into the fold. This has continued at the 2023 ISHS conference in Boston, where I was lucky enough to be presented with the Don and Alleen Nilsen Young Scholar (DANYS) Award for my paper on cringe comedy. I feel incredibly lucky to have had so much support this early on, and want to pass on my thanks to all the people in Sydney this year who took an interest in me and my work. It's been life-changing!

Alexander is pursuing his MA in Philosophy with a thesis focussing on authenticity in live stand-up comedy. His supervisor is Richard Joyce of VUW.

The paper that won Alexander this prestigious ISHS award was entitled “Please laugh: Illocutionary acts as a theory of meaning for jokes”. The abstract reads:

This paper argues that jokes require their own theory of meaning, because general theories of meaning struggle with non-literal language use. Having been a professional comedian for a decade – and read *very* different interpretations of Chris Rock’s Oscars joke about Jada Pinkett Smith, Ricky Gervais and Dave Chapelle’s jokes about transgender people, and Jimmy Carr’s jokes about

Romani victims of the Holocaust in World War II – it's become clear that jokes need a clear framework for correct interpretation. Firstly, I define jokes as illocutionary acts spoken with the intent of provoking laughter in the listener. Secondly, I differentiate between jokes and utterances that may also provoke laughter, but are not strictly speaking jokes: these are anecdotes and opinions. Thirdly, I develop a more nuanced definition of jokes by clarifying their status as a form of humorous lie. Finally, I will build on my theory of the meaning of lies, to produce my theory of the meaning of jokes – essentially arguing that jokes, when correctly identified as such, carry no meaning beyond *Please laugh*. This theory of meaning for jokes can i) help break down the different types of comedic utterance used by stand-up comedians, and ii) help clarify what audiences are meant to take away from the comedic utterance. This paper builds on the previous work of Austin by taking his theory of illocutionary acts, applying it to jokes, and taking it to its logical conclusion. The theory of meaning for jokes I propose following this method can help resolve questions as to why the positive illocutionary aim of the comedian (provoking laughter) is sometimes met with a negative perlocutionary response of the audience (taking offense).

The DANYs Award was named for the two founding Presidents of the ISHS, Don and Alleen Nilsen, both now emeritus professors at Arizona State University. Over the years, AHSN has provided two previous graduate student award winners at ISHS conferences: Maren Rawlings (then at Swinburne University of Technology, Victoria, and now a Fellow in the AHSN's Order of the Jessters) at the Conference in Spain, 2008, and Rebecca Higgle (then a doctoral student at Curtin University, WA) at the 2012 conference in Krakow, Poland. The DANYs Award is now the leading Graduate Student Award made by the ISHS.

Don and Alleen wrote to Alexander to say, "You, and other scholars like you, are the future of the International Society for Humor Studies."

Editors: Many sincere congratulations, Alexander, and we look forward to hearing you present once more at the 2024 AHSN Conference next February in Brisbane.



Don and Alleen Nilsen, both former Presidents of ISHS



Dr Sharon Lockyer, Brunel University and President of the ISHS, congratulates Alexander on his Award



Alexander Sparrow, Victoria University of Wellington, Aotearoa/New Zealand

AHSN-sponsored Event

Chau Chak Wing Museum (CCWM), The University of Sydney

Panel and Discussion of Comic Stereographs

Bringing the Laughter Home: Comic Stereographs in the Early 20th Century

What: Panel on the exhibition of comic stereographs and their viewing equipment at the Chau Chak Wing Museum, The University of Sydney (CCWM)

Where: Chau Chak Wing Museum, The University of Sydney

When: 3 August 2023, 6.30-7.30pm, followed by pop-up bar

Who: Free In-Person attendance (register online at:
<https://www.sydney.edu.au/museum/whats-on/talks-and-events.html>)

Program

Introduction: Jan Brazier (CCWM); **Chair:** Jessica Milner Davis, The University of Sydney

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SUCH A JOLLY TIME as the boys and girls will have with these pictures as a rule on a rainy day when a long of real fun can be had by everybody in the household when this set of one hundred colored comic views arrives. No such value was ever put into stereoscopic views as we place in this, our comic series, which we offer you at less than one cent per view. They are made by our wonderful, new color process of photography, which not only brings out every detail of the subject as viewed by the camera's lens, but also every detail of color just as the artist's eye would appear to you could you have viewed the original with the aid of his eyes.

LAUGHABLE HUGGING AND KISSING SCENES, depicting the ridiculous side of domestic life, amusing bathing scenes, photographs of children engaged in childish pranks, exasperating and ludicrous situations, and other delightful scenes depicting the comic side of life are shown in this funny series of colored stereoscopic views. No series of views is complete without this, our comic series, and no home which owns a stereoscope should be without them. Each colored view is so carefully selected that you can make still fun of your friends and family as they look at them. The children and your visitors and friends will find this series of one hundred colored stereoscopic views, our comic series, which we offer you at

WHEN OUR ARTISTS began the collection of these marvelous colored stereoscopic views were made they were told to seek for entirely new and unusual subjects; they were instructed that their pictures must be absolutely new, that they should create every scene that they should create every scene for funny situations, amusing scenes, and other things that would give you and your friends a good laugh. They obeyed instructions in every way and this remarkable set of 100 colored stereoscopic views, our comic series, which we offer you at

THESE ONE HUNDRED VIEWS are really the funniest stereoscopic views ever gotten together in a single series. The illustrations on this page give you but a faint idea of the beauty and splendid value which we offer you in this series of one hundred colored stereoscopic views. The pictures on this page necessarily show a few of these views, all very much reduced in size, so small in fact, that almost all the details of the pictures are lost, but it will give you a faint idea of the wonderful variety of subjects treated in this series. Laughing scenes, bathing scenes, the pranks of the children, naughty little Willie and his mischievous tricks, John Doe and his greasy old dog, the happy, the tramp, Sammie White and the bald headed man, and all those other funny subjects which have convinced the world, throughout the ages.

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THIS SET OF 100 COMIC COLORED VIEWS BRINGS MORE FUN TO YOU THAN 85 CENTS CAN BUY ANYWHERE ELSE.

Robert Phiddian, Flinders University: The Australian magazine and cartoon context: Technology and the availability of visual imagery in the home

Mark Rolfe, UNSW: The American-Australian context: Topics and social messages for entertainment

Will Visconti, UTS: Music-hall and the performative context: References, characters and scenes for the family

Q&A

Photo: Cover of Sears Roebuck Catalogue, comic stereographs, courtesy Chau Chak Wing Museum.

Speakers 'Bionotes

Robert Phiddian is Professor of English at Flinders University. He studies and writes about political satire, particularly the satire in Australian political cartoons and in 18th century writers

like Jonathan Swift. He has been the Ross Steele AM Fellow at the State Library of NSW, and is presently working on a history of Australian editorial cartooning (contracted to Melbourne University Publishing). Robert is a member of the Australasian Humour Studies Network Review Panel,

Dr Will Visconti coordinates the Italian Major at the University of Technology, Sydney. An expert on music hall and burlesque, his first book was *Beyond the Moulin Rouge: The Life & Legacy of La Goulue* (2022, University of Virginia Press). Forthcoming publications include “The Monstrousness of Mae West” in *Post-Moral Humour in a World of New Gods and Old Monsters* (Tampere University Press), “The Myth of the Moulin Rouge” (in Routledge’s *History of Paris since 1789*) and, with Matthew Kaiser, four edited volumes on 19th century humour and comedy (Routledge’s Historical Resources series).

Dr Mark Rolfe is an honorary lecturer in the School of Social Sciences at the University of New South Wales where he taught for many years. He researches and publishes on Australian and American politics, satire, rhetoric, populism and the process of Americanisation. His publications appear in *The Conversation* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* as well as in academic presses and he is co-editing a book on post-morality and humour (with Benjamin Nickl, Tampere University Press). Mark is a member of the Australasian Humour Studies Network Board.

Dr Jessica Milner Davis FRSN is an honorary research associate at The University of Sydney and at Brunel University’s Centre for Comedy Studies Research. A member of Clare Hall, Cambridge, she has twice served as president of the International Society for Humor Studies (ISHS). Her many books deal with farce, satire, the European comic tradition and cross-cultural studies of humour in Australia, the UK, Japan and China. Jessica co-ordinates the Australasian Humour Studies Network.

Speakers’ Abstracts

Robert Phiddian

The existence of stereographs speaks of a world of relative scarcity of visual images in the home. I will link this history to the parallel story of weekly magazines in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In these, hand-drawn illustrations and cartoons remained dominant until the gradual introduction of better technological means for reproducing photographs in newsprint. Until that happened, stereographs remained rare and remarkable things in domestic environments, giving them an exciting aura and creating a ready market.

Mark Rolfe

Nineteenth century stereographs may seem to be artefacts that are antiquated or mundane when compared to the sophisticated technology of our society. However, they can be understood as evidence of processes of Americanization that have always been part of the Australian story. I will demonstrate this by locating stereographs in the context of popular entertainment of the time and by examining their images, humour and catchphrases. These facets also give us important clues to how these simple devices tapped into popular culture of the time: they did this in ways that still exist in contemporary society.

Will Visconti

Throughout the late 19th and into the 20th century, some of the most prolific users of photography were performers, who recognised the medium as a means of publicising themselves or their performances. From the legitimate stage through to vaudeville, dance-halls and burlesque, *artistes* used photographs as merchandising and as marketing. Looking at examples from the collections held in the Chau Chak Wing Museum alongside examples produced in Britain, the United States and France, I will examine how performers and their fans engaged with each other through photography. This also raises questions about the implications for increased accessibility to public figures and the consumption of texts representing them.

Book Review Available

Dear AHSN members,

Please find below a link to our first collaboration with EJHR: an excellent review of *The Comic Storytelling of Western Japan: Satire and Social Mobility in Kamigata Rakugo* (Cambridge University Press, 2021) by Jessica Milner Davis:

<https://europeanjournalofhumour.org/ejhr/article/view/828/718>

We hope you enjoy the read and that it inspires many of you to learn more about humour in the Japanese context.

We encourage you to also check the rest of the contents in this recent EJHR issue (see separate item) to keep up to date with new contributions to humour across disciplines.

Happy reading,

Beatriz

Dr Beatriz Carbajal-Carrera

AHSN Book Reviews Editor

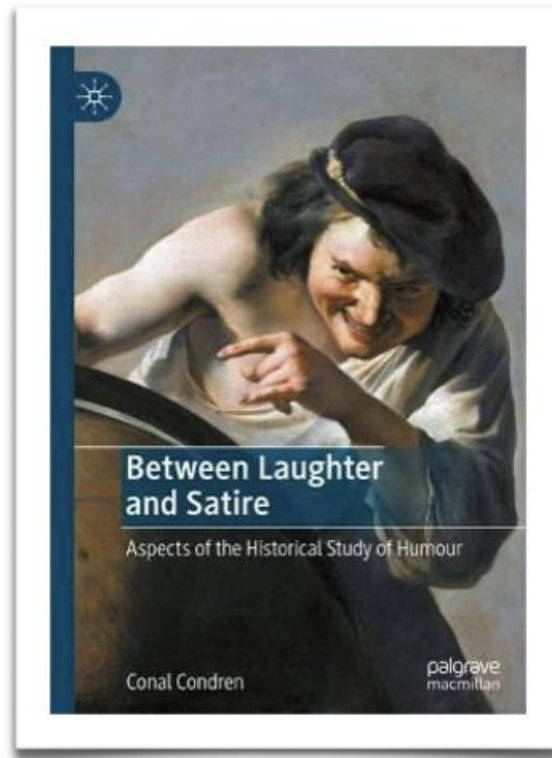
Spanish and Latin American Studies

School of Languages and Cultures

The University of Sydney

AHSN Member's New Book

Conal Condren 2023. *Between Laughter and Satire: Aspects of the Historical Study of Humour*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 238pp. ISBN: 9783031217388



About the book

This book explores closely related aspects of the historical study of humour. It challenges much that has been taken for granted in a field of study for which history has been marginal. It disputes the conventional genealogical view that humour theory dates from antiquity and outlines an alternative conceptual history. It critically examines the nostrum that humour is universal. It then explores the methodological difficulties in treating both verbal and non-verbal humour historically, dealing with contextualisation, intentionality, translation and reception. It explores the variable relationships between satire and definition and concludes with a detailed case study from recent history: the iconic “Yes Minister” and “Yes, Prime Minister” television comedies. These are commonly seen as realistic, but better understood as presenting popularised theories for satiric and propagandistic effect. Only in their treatment of language can we assess a putative political realism. The satires are often highly perceptive but largely dependent on misleading and inadequate theories of political discourse.

Author Bionote

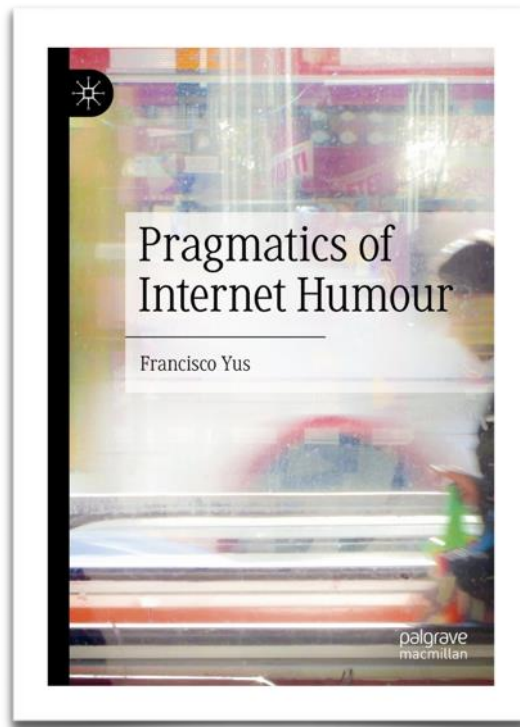
Conal Condren is an Emeritus Scientia Professor at UNSW, a member of two Cambridge Colleges and a fellow both of the Australian Academy of the Humanities and The Social Sciences in Australia. He has published widely and principally in early modern intellectual history. Among his books are *The Status and Appraisal of Classic Texts*; *Argument and Authority in Early Modern England*; *Political Vocabularies: Word Change and the Nature of Politics*.

New Book on Internet Humour

Francisco Yus. 2023. *Pragmatics of Internet Humour*. Xv; 347pp. 257 b/w illustrations.

London/Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 978-3-031-31901-3; Softcover ISBN978-3-031-31904-4; eBook ISBN978-3-031-31902-0

<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-31902-0#toc>



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Beyond Humour: Relevant Affective Effects Pages 309-338

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About this book

This book provides a first thorough analysis of internet humour from a cognitive-pragmatic perspective, covering a wide range of discourses that are pervasive online and focusing especially on messaging interactions, social networking sites and memes. Its chapters describe the inferential strategies implemented to turn online coded discourses into meaningful interpretations, which in turn can be devised and manipulated for the sake of humour. Furthermore, and apart from the

typical object of pragmatic research (humorous discourses), the book emphasises the importance of the interfaces 'design and of the qualities of the users engaged in humorous interactions (called contextual constraints), additionally highlighting the parallel significance of the various effects, shaped as feelings and emotions, that stem from humorous communication on the internet. In sum, the book delivers a rich and detailed account of humorous internet discourses through dissecting their affordances as a medium, tracking the users 'intentions, and predicting the audiences 'interpretive strategies, with the goal of helping the reader obtain a better understanding of internet humour and its role in today's online interactions.

Author's Bionote

Francisco Yus is full professor at the University of Alicante. He has applied pragmatics to internet communication (*Ciberpragmática*, 2001; *Ciberpragmática 2.0*, 2010; *Cyberpragmatics*, 2011; *Smartphone Communication*, 2021). He has also focused on irony and humour (*Humour and Relevance*, 2016). He is editor (with Chaoqun Xie) of the journal *Internet Pragmatics*.

New Journal Issue

***European Journal of Humour Research*, Vol. 11 No. 2 (2023)**



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Salomi Boukala 202-204 [Book review: Webber, Julie A. \(ed.\) \(2019\). The Joke Is on Us: Political Comedy in \(Late\) Neoliberal Times. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.](#)

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New Issue of *ForHum* July 2023

Humour and the Law e-Newsletter

Extracts



Welcome to the newsletter of **ForHum: Forum for Humor and the Law**! ForHum is an international platform for practicing lawyers, law and humor scholars, cartoonists, comedians, and anyone interested in humor, free speech and related legal matters.

Our newsletter is issued every three months, and consists of three main sections focusing on recent and upcoming **events**, updates on **publications** and **resources** from our network, and **other news** or reading/listening **suggestions** concerning humor and the law.



Upcoming

Conference 'Humor and Conflict in the Digital Age'

The conference Humor and Conflict in the Digital Age will take place in Ghent, Belgium on 29-30 November 2023). The confirmed **keynote speakers** are Chi-Hé Elder (University of East Anglia) and Eleni Kapogianni (University of Kent); Giseline Kuipers (KU Leuven); and Raúl Pérez (La Verne

University). The conference will also feature a **public-facing roundtable** with humor practitioners, including stand-up comedian Shazia Mirza, writer and producer Annie Julia Wyman (co-creator of *The Chair* on Netflix and *Welcome to Chippendales* on Hulu), cartoonist Tjeerd Royaards, and Mike Gillis (head writer at *The Onion*). **More details on registration will be available in September via the [conference website](#).**

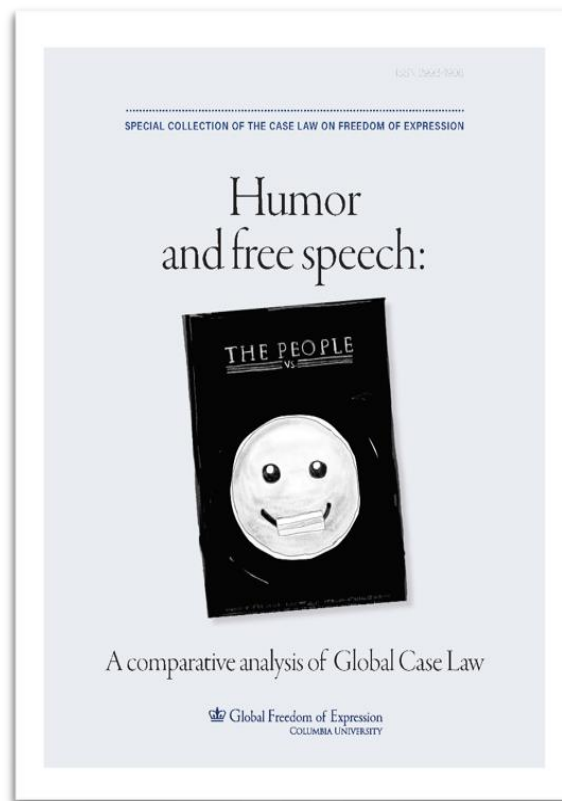
European Cartoon Award

The European Cartoon Award (ECA) was founded in 2019 by the European Press Prize and Studio Europa Maastricht to encourage cartoonists in their essential work for freedom of expression. This year's ECA ceremony and exhibition will take place in **The Hague** (Beeld & Geluid Museum) on **September 14th**. More details on the program – including ForHum's involvement – will be announced soon!

Databases to Advance Rights

On 3 May 2023, ForHum founders Alberto Godioli and Laura Little presented the ForHum legal database during the panel "Protecting Freedom of Expression through Comparative Global Case Law: Databases to Advance Rights," organized by Columbia Global Freedom of Expression in the framework of the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day. **Recording [available here](#).**

Publications



More publications from the ForHum network

Natalie **Alkiviadou**, Case Law on Hate Speech: The Enduring Question of Thresholds. Columbia Global Freedom of Expression, Special Collection. June 2023.

Laura E. **Little** and Andrew **Rosen**, Is Trump “too Big” for Trademark? Vidal v. Elster, No. 22-704, petition for review granted 6/5/2023. ForHum, 23 June 2023.

Alberto **Godioli**, On the abuse of human rights law in Sri Lanka: The arrest of Nathasha Edirisooriya. ForHum, 24 June 2023.

Jennifer **Young**, China Cracks Down on Stand-Up. ForHum, 13 June 2023.

Laura E. **Little** and Andrew **Rosen**, Epilogue for the Jack Daniels Case: The Supreme Court’s Final Opinion. ForHum, 9 June 2023.

NB: *For a constantly updated overview of scholarly publications on humor and the law, please check the Resources section of the ForHum website.*

The ForHum newsletter will be back in September 2023.

Meanwhile, please email us at info@forhum.org if you wish to share an announcement via the next newsletter, or would like to contribute to our website in any way (e.g. writing a blog post, signaling a case for our Legal Database etc.). Your contribution is most welcome!

3rd Humor Research Project

Hybrid Conference, Poland

Date: 02 October 2023 – 03 October 2023

Location: Generała Stefana Grot-Roweckiego 5, 41-205 Sosnowiec, Poland

Contact Person: Joanna Ryszka

Meeting Email: joanna.ryszka@us.edu.pl

Web Site: <https://neolinguists.us.edu.pl/index.php/2023/05/24/3rd-humor-research-project/>

Call Deadline: 30 July 2023

Focus of Meeting

The purpose of the Humor Research Project is to explore the inherent interdisciplinarity of humor. We hope that the conference will become a forum for discussions on how humor functions within different paradigms, thus yielding a variety of perspectives, including linguistic and (cross-)cultural ones, as well as those proper to literary and translation studies.

Call for Papers

We cordially invite researchers working at the intersections of language and humor to attend this event and present their insights into how language becomes humorous and how humor can become dark, morbid, or black.

The conference will be held in a hybrid form. We accept abstracts written in English or Polish.

Conference fee: 300PLN

Attendance without presentation and for students without a master's degree is free of charge.

Registration form: <https://formularze.us.edu.pl/form/index/4151> (please, remember to confirm your submission)

Registration form for students: <https://formularze.us.edu.pl/form/index/4158> (please, remember to confirm your submission)

Dates

Submission deadline: July 30th

Acceptance notification: August 13th

Payment by August 27th

Conference: October 2nd and 3rd

For more information, visit: <https://neolinguists.us.edu.pl/index.php/humor-research-project/>

Contact us: neolinguists@us.edu.pl

Panel on Humour at Athens Conference on Architectural History

AHSN member Katerina Zacheropoulou who is currently studying in London is organising a pioneering humour-themed panel in the biannual European Architectural History Network (EAHN) Conference, next year in Athens. Her collaborator is Professor Michela Rosso and the title of the Panel is “Histories of Architecture, Irony and Humour, 1750-present”.

The Call for Papers is now open with a deadline of September 8, 2023.

More information and submission details can be found on the **conference website** at: <http://eahn2024.arch.ntua.gr/index.php/call-for-papers/#S20>

Abstract: Session 20 – Histories of Architecture, Irony and Humour, 1750-present

Convenors: Michela Rosso, Politecnico di Torino; Katerina Zacharopoulou, The Bartlett School of Architecture.

With the transformations of the public sphere and the rise of a mass public in the eighteenth century, architecture has become part of a media-driven culture. Among the genres addressing the built environment some emerged that were especially effective in re-appropriating and disseminating architectural culture, displaying its distortions or singling out its inadequacies. In a media-saturated culture humour stands out as a form of social communication and as a means to portray society, revealing the ambivalences of metropolitan life and exposing the shocks provoked by processes of modernization. Though less exposed to social criticism than the politician, the figure of the architect has not stayed safe from the pencils of cartoonists and satirical writers. From Hogarth’s “Five Orders of Periwigs” to George Cruikshank’s perceptive cartoons of the 1820s uncovering the reality of the London building world, Karl Arnold’s caricatures lampooning the 1914 Werkbund Exhibition, and Saul Steinberg’s celebrated cartoons of New York City and urban

spaces, graphic humor appears as a promising, yet largely uncharted terrain of investigation for the architectural historian.

At the same time, humour, in its different manifestations of irony, joke, derision and wit, has served – and continues to serve, as a powerful tool for the modern architect, not least as an instrument of self-promotion in an increasingly competitive professional market. Thus, the historical investigation of architectural humour might encompass the entire itinerary of modernity, from Pugin's caricatures of notable nineteenth-century buildings to Le Corbusier's incorporation of popular cartoons in his *Urbanisme*, Venturi and Scott Brown's use of parody as a polemical tool, Stanley Tigerman's *Architoons*, and, more recently BIG's graphic novels, architectural comics by Lewardists, or Bow-Wow's explorations into irony's creative resources. Despite the abundance of materials and the potential fertility of this field of study, the nexus between architecture and the rhetorical strategies of the comic remains largely unexplored.

This panel posits architectural humour as a serious object of study: its aim is to discuss the modes in which the architectonic and the humorous intersect and how this encounter can reveal ideological fault-lines and expose critical subtexts that are not always obvious at first glance. It calls for papers which explore the diversity of historical trajectories of humour as applied to architecture, from 1750 to the present, in western and non-western cultures. We are interested in episodes of visual and verbal humour produced within and outside the architectural discipline: these may include cartoons and satirical texts targeting architects and their works and disseminated through non-disciplinary publications and popular media; architects' texts and projects – built or unbuilt, in which the use of humour is pivotal for the construction of design strategies and poetics.

The following questions are at stake: What are the issues addressed by episodes of humour? When does humour cross paths with architectural work and design processes, and how does it affect the perception of architects and their work? What are the forms of interaction, mutual exchange or cross-fertilisation that can be observed between architectural humour and the internal discourses of the field?

Comedy Studies

Call for Papers for a Special Issue on Cabaret

Deadline for abstracts: 1 October 2023

Edited by Dr. Dick Zijp (Utrecht University)

Cabaret can be a confusing term. It can both refer to a place, usually a café or a small theatre, and to a genre. For some, it raises associations with barely dressed girls in nightclubs (Chakraborty, 2023). For others, it primarily denotes a historical form of comedic variety theatre (Appignanesi, 2004 [1975]). For yet others, it refers to the contemporary art of theatre comedy (Dunkl, 2019; Zijp, 2023). Remarkably, in spite of the term's association with humour and comedy, cabaret has scarcely received attention from scholars in the field of comedy studies. This lack of academic attention has added to the confusion. The sparse academic literature available focuses on the

origins of the genre in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Europe, especially in the artistic cafés of turn-of-the-century Paris and the German and Austrian cabarets of the 1920s (e.g., Appignanesi, 2004, Jelavich, 1993; Segel, 1987). The overwhelming success of Bob Fosse's 1972 film *Cabaret* has contributed to the image of cabaret as a form of nightclub entertainment that belongs to another era. Indeed, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines cabaret as a 'restaurant that serves liquor and offers a variety of musical entertainment' and points mostly to its historical manifestations.

Meanwhile, the academic literature on comedy tends to focus on the current art of stand-up comedy. As Oliver Double and Sharon Lockyer have pointed out, 'today the word "comedy" is often taken to be synonymous with "stand-up"' (2022, 6). This has somewhat obscured the relationship between cabaret and comedy, and has directed attention away from cabaret's present-day manifestations, and from the continuities and discontinuities between past and present forms.

While approaching cabaret as a form of comedy, this special issue welcomes contributions on the wide range of meanings, associations, and manifestations of cabaret, both past and present, and within a global context. As Double and Lockyer mention, the term cabaret 'suggests a wider range of performance styles' (2022: 6) than the term standup comedy. According to Lisa Appignanesi, cabaret originated as a 'vibrant mixture of satire, eroticism and lyricism' (2004: 38) and sits somewhere in between the avant-gardist and the popular, the high and the low, the light and the dark. But in spite of its various manifestations, cabaret is a distinctive genre with its own history, conventions and politics. At the same time, an overemphasis on the presumed origins of cabaret may lead to romanticised or presentist histories of the genre (e.g., Ibo, 1970). This special issue aims to move beyond the dominant historical narratives and is interested in unwritten histories and current manifestations of this fascinating and miscellaneous genre.

Contributions may focus on – but are certainly not limited to – topics and/or questions such as:

- Local histories of cabaret;
- Alternative (non-European) histories of cabaret and transnational influences;
- The aesthetic and political workings of humour;
- The performance of identity (e.g., gender, sexuality, race, class, caste, ability, religion, appearance, age);
- Queer histories of cabaret and queer cabaret;
- The production and reception of cabaret performances;
- The relationship between humour and eroticism;
- The intertwinement of cabaret and other genres or performance styles, such as stand-up comedy, revue, burlesque, circus, variety or musical theatre.

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<https://dspace.library.uu.nl/handle/1874/425894>.

Format

Please send an abstract (250–300 words) with a short bio (100–120 words). Deadline: 1 October 2023.

Timeline

Abstracts: 1 October 2023

First drafts: 1 February 2024

Final drafts: 15 December 2024

Publication: February 2025

Contact

Issue-related enquiries should be directed to the issue editor via: d.c.zijp@uu.nl.

Perspectives on Stand-up Comedy in the PRC

International News Item

Radio Free America recently interviewed two AHSN members for a news item on comedy in the PRC and its evolving state, entitled: “**Have you heard the one about stand-up in China?** On International Joke Day, recent moves are raising questions about the Communist Party's tolerance for comedy.”

Journalists Mary Zhao and Jim Snyder reported for RFA Investigative on 30 June 2023, quoting Jocelyn Chey and Mark Rolfe.

The full article is available in print format at: <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/comedy-06302023143100.html>

Perspectives on Humour and Censorship in the PRC

A Chinese comedian's Xi joke and the lucrative market for patriotism: Framing a comedian's joke as mere state censorship ignores many aspects of the political culture in China

Wanning Sun, May 26, 2023



Chinese Comedian Li Haoshi (Image: Tencent)

Fewer things guarantee higher ratings and clicks than headlines that have these keywords: China, Xi, and ban. If you can manage to have all three in a story, you have a winner. That's why Li Haoshi, a Chinese standup comedian whose joke went horribly wrong, was such a gift to major Western media outlets, from CNN and the BBC to *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*.

Li, whose stage name is House, was telling a joke to a Beijing audience about how he had adopted two dogs that had wandered down from the countryside mountains. Compared with the small, cute dogs people see on the streets, these two, which he had brought back to Shanghai, were formidable in size and demeanour. Walking the city streets, he felt proud as a dog owner, except these dogs were so energetic that he was having a hard time keeping pace. So far, so good. House was getting lots of laughs.

But then he stepped on a mine. Describing how fast the dogs were chasing down a squirrel, he said they reminded him of the phrase “Have a good work style, be able to fight and win battles” — the eight-word slogan President Xi Jinping had announced as a goal for the People’s Liberation Army in 2013. This remark raised a laugh but proved costly. Authorities fined the comedian’s company, Xiaoguo Culture, more than 14.7 million yuan (A\$3.1 million) for having “tampered with the content of the show during the performance declaration procedures”. In other words, Li apparently departed from the script they had submitted for approval prior to the performance. Li has since been arrested, pending a police investigation.

Little observed in media coverage, however, is what pushed Li towards the gallows in the first place. As with the many incidents of “cancel culture” we see in the West, the role of social media was indispensable. The video of Li telling the joke went viral before he came under the radar of the authorities. Courtesy of social media and the internet, initial favourable reactions were quickly trumped by negative ones.

A few media reports told us that a nationalist tipped off the local authorities, but failed to acknowledge that the individual represented a collective political identity commonly referred to as “Xiao Fen Hong” (Little Pinks). According to one commentator, the Little Pinks are “splenetic, sarcastic and easily offended”, and “young, hypersensitive, hyper-nationalist keyboard commandos of the People’s Republic of China”. These patriotic vigilantes are on standby to defend their motherland, and their feelings are easily hurt. On this occasion, they didn’t miss.

Once tipped off, and cognisant of the massive grassroots anger being fomented by the Little Pinks, the authorities had to respond. And respond they did, with considerable force, and without much concern about a possible community backlash.

What has been even less observed in Western media is that the Little Pinks movement is a child with many foster parents, none of whom can claim sole credit for its vibrant growth. To be sure, the government actively promotes loyalty to China, and the existence of the Little Pinks is a testimony to the effectiveness of such official patriotic education. But like everywhere else, a more effective incubator of patriotism is the market bottom line. After all, there is ample research telling us that patriotism is one of the most profitable emotions in advertising — cue our own Qantas’ signature tune, “I still call Australia home”. Similarly, patriotism has been shown to ensure better ratings, sell more papers and ensure cinematic box office success.

In Chinese internet culture, as elsewhere, strong emotions, provocative words and visceral reactions go viral more easily than calm, rational debates. Stories about the “hurt feelings” of a nation attract more clicks, leading to higher opportunities for monetisation. Since promoting patriotism is one of the few politically safe and financially lucrative business strategies for bloggers, micro-bloggers and video streamers in China, it is a no-brainer for the streaming sector to exploit it.

Comedians in Western-style democracies are much luckier than Li and his colleagues. After all, comedians in Australia often make jokes that offend the powers that be — politicians, the monarchy, the church. But although there have been a few cases where comedy has fallen victim to the law, by and large we have not seen people thrown into detention, given a hefty fine or investigated by the police, unless defamation is involved. But the stark and fundamental differences between democracy and authoritarianism aside, it is nevertheless still possible — some may say even useful — to look at this incident as an example of cancel culture with “Chinese characteristics”, to repurpose Deng Xiaoping’s famous saying.

As with the many cancel culture incidents we see in Australia — a comedian being trolled, a comedy award having its name changed, a show being literally cancelled — the Chinese public was highly polarised as to whether Li was guilty and deserved his punishment. Just as the public here is divided over whether certain topics (our soldiers, the RSL, the ANZAC tradition) should be off-limits for comedians, the public in China is also torn over whether the People's Liberation Army should be fair game.

Humour scholars have reminded us that censorship is only one of the possible external constraints. Professor Jocelyn Chey, an expert on Chinese humour, believes that sensitivity goes hand in hand with telling jokes elsewhere as well as in China.

“While joke censorship is often aligned with authoritarianism, there are matters of public taste that change according to time and circumstance,” she writes. “We must not joke about the disabled, for instance.”

Either way, framing Li's experience exclusively as a ban by Chinese state censorship means our readers are again kept in the dark about many aspects of the political culture in China, some of which are fundamentally different from ours, some of which are remarkably similar.

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About the Author

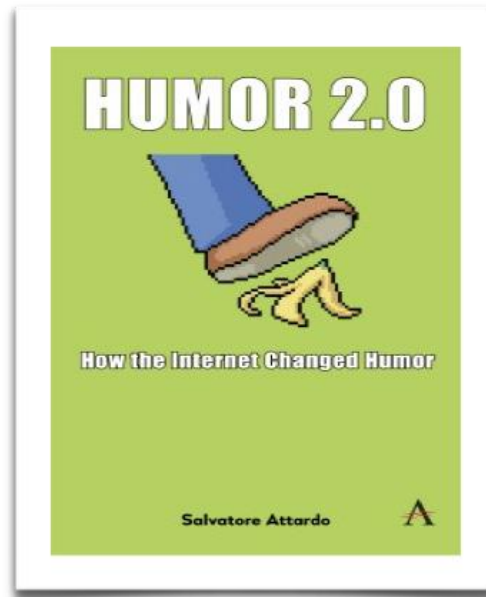


Wanning Sun is a professor of media and communication in the faculty of arts and social Sciences at UTS. She is a fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities and a member of the Australian Research Council's College of Experts (2020-23). She is best known in the field of China studies for her ethnography of rural-to-urban migration and social inequality in contemporary China. She is an Australia-China Relations Institute research associate, and writes about Chinese diaspora, diasporic Chinese media, and Australia-China relations.

New Book on Humour – Advance Notice

Salvatore Attardo. 2023. *Humor 2.0: How the Internet Changed Humor*. London & New York: Anthem Press. Hardback, 250 Pp. ISBN:9781839988561

<https://anthempres.com/humor-2-0-hb>



Book Summary

The book shows how humor has changed since the advent of the internet: new genres, new contexts, and new audiences. The book provides a guide to such phenomena as memes, video parodies, photobombing, and cringe humor. Included are also in-depth discussions of the humor in phenomena such as Dogecoin, the joke currency, and the use of humor by the alt-right. It also shows how the cognitive mechanisms of humor remain unchanged. Written by a well-known specialist in humor studies, the book is engaging and readable, but also based on extensive scholarship.

Advance Praise

“As the preeminent scholar on language and humor, Attardo takes readers on a fascinating tour of various forms of internet humor. With examples ranging from the prosaic to the political, Attardo shows us how the human capacity to produce and interpret humor – while remaining fundamentally unchanged – has been fully exploited in the realm of the digital.” – Camilla Vásquez PhD, Professor of Applied Linguistics & Associate Editor, Discourse, Context & Media, Department of World Languages, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL

“Humor 2.0: How the Internet Changed Humor by Salvatore Attardo is a book that internet researchers have been waiting for, even if they don’t know it yet. Not only meant for the academic audience, it summarizes in an entertaining yet scholarly way the many ways that humor is the same yet different after the advent of the digital era. This is a truly timely and worthwhile topic to

tackle, and Attardo has managed to make a brilliant contribution to understanding online humor
— Liisi Laineste, Senior Research Fellow, Estonian Literary Museum Researcher, Tartu University

About the Author

Salvatore Attardo PhD (Purdue, 1991) is a Professor of Linguistics at Texas A&M University-Commerce. He has published over 100 articles on various topics of semantics and pragmatics. His books include *Linguistic Theories of Humor* (1994), *Humorous Texts* (2001), and *Introduction to the Linguistics of Humor* (2020). He edited *HUMOR: International Journal of Humor Research* (2002–2011), the Sage *Encyclopedia of Humor Studies* (2014), and the *Handbook of Language and Humor* (2017). He also published other books on pragmatics, eye tracking, script-based semantics, and a successful introduction to linguistics.

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The Humour Studies Digest

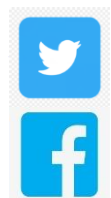
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