



Australasian Humour Studies Network



AHSN Digest – September 2023

Update on AHSN2024 University of Queensland 7-9 February 2024

We are looking forward to welcoming you to Brisbane in February 2024 for the 30th AHSN conference. In this conference update, we'd like to announce our **keynote speakers**, an **extension to the deadline** for the call for abstract submissions, and also provide some information about **accommodation** and **getting around** in Brisbane.

AHSN2024 Keynote Speakers

We are delighted to announce our two keynote speakers for the AHSN2024 conference: **Professor Delia Chiaro** and **Associate Professor Kerry Mullan**.

Professor Chiaro from the Department of Interpreting and Translation at the University of Bologna (Italy) is a world-renowned expert in translation and humour studies, with a particular focus on the perception of verbally expressed humour on screen (film, television and video games) across different linguistic and cultural boundaries. She was also President of the International Society of Humor Studies (ISHS) from 2015-2017.

Associate Professor Kerry Mullan from the School of Global, Urban and Social Studies at RMIT University (Australia) is an internationally recognised expert in cross-cultural communication, with particular focus on humour studies and pragmatics. Much of her work on humour has focused on conversational humour in French and (Australian) English, and more recently she has also been advancing work on humour in social media. She is currently Chair of the Board of the Australasian Humour Studies Network.

Extension of Abstract Submission Deadline

Due to popular demand, the **deadline for abstract submissions has been extended to 20 September 2023**. While papers may address the Conference theme, "The Language of Humour", papers focusing on any aspect of humour will also be warmly welcomed. Don't forget there are 5 research student scholarships to be won by the best and brightest.

Guidelines and submission portal: <https://ahshumourstudies.org/abstracts/>

Registration for the Conference is now open with Early Bird Registration closing on 1 December 2023. All presenters and attendees must register and pay the appropriate fee to attend. Please register at: <https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1102181>

Accommodation and Getting Around Brisbane

During your stay in Brisbane for AHSN2024, we recommend you choose accommodation in either the South Bank precinct or Brisbane CBD. There are few accommodation options close to the UQ St Lucia campus, and there is much more to see and do in the CBD and South Brisbane during free time. These locations will also be most convenient for attending the conference welcome reception and dinner.

Accommodation options are many and varied, and both locations have easy access to City Cat ferry terminals and bus networks with direct routes servicing The University of Queensland. If using public transport to travel to UQ campus, we recommend accommodation close to either the North Quay or South Bank City Cat terminal, or Cultural Centre or King George Square Bus Station (indicated by maroon markers on map below). Central and South Brisbane train stations are serviced by the AirTrain, which is a direct service from Brisbane International and Domestic Airport.

Hotel Accommodation Options

Hotels in both the Brisbane CBD or at South Bank offer a great range of restaurants, bars and tourist attractions, all within easy public transport access to the UQ St Lucia Campus.

Emporium Hotel South Bank

[Emporium Hotel South Bank](#)

267 Grey Street, South Brisbane

1800 346 835 | +61 7 3556 3333 (outside Australia)

info@emporiumhotels.com.au

Pullman & Mercure Brisbane King George Square

[Pullman & Mercure Brisbane King George Square](#)

Corner of Ann and Roma Streets, Brisbane

+61 (0)7 3229 9111

H8784@accor.com

Mantra South Bank

[Mantra South Bank](#)

161 Grey Street, South Bank

+61 (07) 3305 2500

southbankbris.res@mantra.com.au

Other Brisbane Accommodation Options

Sofitel Brisbane Central combines contemporary design with French elegance in a 5-star hotel, located over Central Station, and a short walk to the Queen Street Mall and bus station. The Riverside Ferry Terminal is a 1-minute walk away. The hotel offers guests all you would expect in a 5-star hotel, with pool, gymnasium, concierge, 24-hour room service and award-winning restaurants.

Hilton Brisbane is centrally located in the heart of Brisbane's Queen Street Mall shopping precinct, with easy access to all modes of public transport. This 5-star hotel offers contemporarily furnished rooms with premium bedding and pillow menu, designed for business and leisure travellers. Amenities include outdoor pool, tennis courts and gymnasium, inhouse restaurant and bar, 24-hour room service, concierge and business centre.

Ibis Styles Brisbane is a 4-star hotel, located conveniently close to the City Cat terminal and Brisbane's main shopping hub. The hotel is modern, offering stylish, colourful and comfortable rooms at economical rates. Guests enjoy free internet, complimentary laundry facilities and all-day dining plus 24 hour "Call & Collect" menu. Room tip: sometimes rooms on lower floors can get a bit of street noise, so we suggest you request a room on a higher floor.

Next Hotel Brisbane is located on the Queen Street Mall, right in the hub of Brisbane's central shopping district, and a short walk to the ferry terminal. This hotel focuses on efficiency and functionality, providing 4-star comfort and convenience. Guests with early morning or late-night flights can access the 'In Transit Zone', offering showers, sleep pods and work stations.

See you in Brisbane in February 2024!

AHSN2024 Conference Organising Committee

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

Michael Haugh, UQ (co-convenor)

Valeria Sinkeviciute, UQ (co-convenor)

Nick Hugman, UQ

Amir Sheikhan, UQ

ChanHma Wangsomchok, UQ

Lara Weinglass, UQ & QUT



AHSN2024 Keynote Speakers Associate Professor Kerry Mullan and Professor Chiara



South Bank Emporium Hotel Pool



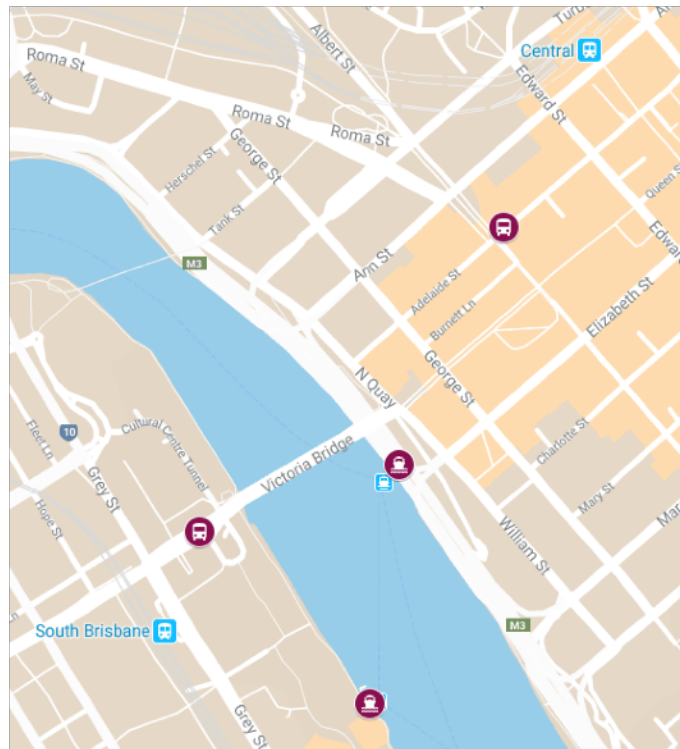
South Bank Parklands



Moreton Island paradise



University of Queensland St Lucia Campus, Brisbane



South Bank Parklands and City Transport

Message from the Chair: Three New Jess-ters for 2023

Kerry writes:

As Chair of the Board, this is one of my nicest annual duties. Following a rigorous process of nominations and voting by the Board and the Review Panel, the following three AHSN members have been chosen as the Fellows in the Order of the Jess-ters for 2023. All three stood out as obvious choices and their nominations were unanimously supported.

Angus McLachlan. Member AHSN Review Panel 2010 to present; Review Panel Chair 2018-2023; Deputy Chair of Review Panel 2023-present; host of the 23rd AHSN Conference, Ballarat School of Mines, 2017. Angus has presented at 14 colloquia since 2001. Key publications include: “The relationship between familiarity, gender, disagreement and status and bouts of solidarity and joint laughter”; *Current Psychology* (2022). “Role of laughter in establishing solidarity and status”, *European Journal of Humour Research* (2022); and “Elements of sensation-seeking and their relationship to two aspects of humour—perceived funniness and overt expression”, *Personality and Individual Differences* (with Emma Lourey, 2003).

Lindsay Foyle. Member AHSN Review Panel 2012-2022, designed AHSN badge logo and conference and website banners and contributed cartoons for AHSN use over many years. Lindsay has presented at 11 colloquia with AHSN, since 2001. He curated an exhibition of cartoons for the Sydney (2016) conference. Key publications include his cartoons in *The Australian*, *The Bulletin*, *Australian Business Review* and *The Daily Telegraph*. Lindsay won the award for the best political cartoon in the 1999 Coffs Harbour cartoon competition, first prize for best comic in 2000 and a merit award in the Olympics cartoon section in 1999. His articles on Australian cartoon history include “The Top cartoonists of 1988” (*Bulletin* supplement, 15 November 1988, 91-114), and “Hidden from history: The funny women” (*Bulletin*, 21 November 1989, 101-7). Currently, he is a co-investigator on ARC Discovery Grant, 2023-2026 - ‘Cartoon Nation: Australian Editorial Cartooning - Past, Present, and Future’ with fellow AHSN members Robert Phiddian (Flinders University) and Richard Scully (UNE).

Michael Meany. Editor of the Digest/Newsletter from 2015 to 2022 and co-host (with Michael Ewans) of the 2013 AHSN conference in Newcastle. He has presented at eleven conferences since 2011. Key publications include: Meany M M, Clark T, Joseph S, “Comedy and artificial intelligence: Do we laugh when a thing gives the impression of being a person?”, *International Journal of New Media, Technology and the Arts* (2014); Meany M M, Clark T, Laineste L, “Comedy, creativity, and culture: A Metamodern perspective”, *The International Journal of Literary Humanities* (2014), Meany M M, Clark T, “Design dramaturgy: A case study in new media, humor and artificial intelligence”, *Design Principles and Practices: An International Journal* (2013), Meany M M, Clark T, “Chat-bot humour: A survey of methodological approaches for a creative new media project”, *International Journal of Technology, Knowledge and Society* (2012), Meany M M, Clark T, “Scripting humour in conversational agents: Improvisation and emergence of humorous interchanges”, *International Journal of the Arts in Society* (2011) and Meany M M, Clark T, “Humour theory and conversational agents: An application in the development of computer-based agents”, *International Journal of the Humanities* (2010).

Angus, Lindsay and Mike will be admitted as Jess-ters at the closing ceremony of the AHSN 2024 conference at the University of Queensland in Brisbane.

Kerry

Assoc. Prof. Kerry Mullan
Global, Urban and Social Studies
RMIT University
Chair Australasian Humour Studies Network Board
E: kerry.mullan@rmit.edu.au

Eds: Congratulations to Angus, Lindsay and Mike, and sincere thanks for all you have done for AHSN and its members over the years!



Angus McLachlan



Lindsay Foyle



Michael Meany

International Society of Humor Studies (ISHS)

Announcement of Special Interest Group Proposals

SIGs

ISHS President, Sharon Lockyer (Centre for Comedy Studies Research, Brunel University London), has invited members of the ISHS to form Specialist Interest Groups. As she presented at this year's ISHS Conference in July in Boston, these Specialist Interest Groups (SIGs) will be member-led, and the Groups will be encouraged to put together streams and/or panels at future ISHS Conferences. SIGs are also a good way for members to connect with each other and to raise the profile of humor studies. If you would like to propose a Specialist Interest Group, you can submit an Expression of Interest to the ISHS Executive Secretary at humorstudies@outlook.com by October 6, 2023, with information on the SIG's title, leadership, membership, and mission. Additional details on ISHS Specialist Interest Groups and SIG proposals are provided in the Newsletter.

Logo Competition

The ISHS Executive Board has recognized the interest to update the ISHS logo, shown in the header of this e-mail. In response, the Board has launched a competition for a logo redesign. To enter the competition, interested members can design and submit one or more logo entries. The entries must be original, reflective of the Society's nature, and suitable for an international audience. All entries must be e-mailed to the ISHS Executive Secretary at humorstudies@outlook.com by October 31, 2023. The membership will vote on the Board approved entries, and the winning logo creator will receive a prize of \$150.00. Additional details on submission requirements, judging, and the prize are provided in the Newsletter.

The Executive Secretary of the ISHS, Dr Martin Lampert, will be happy to assist with any questions or comments about ISHS membership via email as below:

Martin Lampert, PhD
Executive Secretary
International Society for Humor Studies
www.humorstudies.org
E-mail: humorstudies@outlook.com

Journal of 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 stand-up 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 intertwining of cabaret and other genres or performance styles, such as stand-up comedy, revue, burlesque, circus, variety or musical theatre.

References

- Appignanesi, Lisa. 2004 [1975]. *The Cabaret*. New Haven CN & London: Yale UP.
- Chakraborty, Aishika. 2023. *Calcutta Cabaret: Dance of Pleasure or Perversion? South Asian History and Culture* 14 (2): 167–185.
- Double, Oliver, and Sharon Lockyer, eds. 2022. *Alternative Comedy Now and Then: Critical Perspectives*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dunkl, Nathalie. 2019. *Das Kabarett: Eine Integrative Theorie*. Baden-Baden: Tectum Verlag.
- Ibo, Wim. 1970. *En nu de moraal van dit lied: 75 jaar Nederlands cabaret*. Amsterdam: Nederlandse Rotogravure.
- Jelavich, Peter. 1993. *Berlin Cabaret*. Cambridge MA: Harvard UP.
- Segel, Harold. 1987. *Turn-of-the-century Cabaret: Paris, Barcelona, Berlin, Munich, Vienna, Cracow, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Zurich*. New York: Columbia UP.
- Zijp, Dick. 2023. *Comedians without a Cause: The Politics and Aesthetics of Humour in Dutch Cabaret (1966-2020)*. Doctoral dissertation, Utrecht University. <https://dspace.library.uu.nl/handle/1874/425894>. 3

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

STOP PRESS

Research Scholarship --ARC Grant on Australian Comedy

Monash University, Victoria: PhD Scholarship in Australian Performance Comedy as an Agent of Change

Job No: 655761

Location: Monash University, Caulfield campus

Employment Type: Full-time

Duration: 3.5-year fixed-term appointment

Remuneration: The successful applicant will receive a Research Living Allowance, at current value of \$33,000AUD per annum 2023 full-time rate (tax-free stipend), indexed plus allowances as per RTP stipend scholarship conditions at: www.monash.edu/graduate-research/study/scholarships/scholarship-policy-and-procedures. Domestic applicants will be prioritised, however, a tuition fee scholarship and Single Overseas Health Cover (OSHC) will be provided for a successful international awardee.

The Opportunity: This PhD scholarship is funded as an important part of an ARC funded Linkage project **Comedy Country: Australian Performance Comedy as an Agent of Change**, conducted by Associate Professor Tony Moore and Professor Steve Vizard.

Funding is for a PhD scholarship on the topic of political, social and cultural impact of Australian performance comedy, both live and mediated. The PhD will form an important part of the ARC Linkage Project *Comedy Country*, that investigates the development of comic performance across stage, cinema, radio, television and streaming, focussing on its transformational relationship with, and impact on, Australian society, culture and the creative industries from the aftermath of World War 2 until the present. The project's key hypothesis is that since the 1950s comic performance has not merely reflected a changing Australia but helped drive social and cultural change and the generation of national and other identities, including Indigenous. Led by Monash, the four-year interdisciplinary project brings together leading media, cultural and performance studies academics, from three Australian universities, in partnership with two festivals, six cultural collecting organisations and a media production company to build interdisciplinary Humanities and industry collaborations in digital methods for archive research and transmedia communication. As well as publications, Comedy Country is producing an online text and audio-visual hub that presents findings and original digitised archive material, short documentaries, podcasts, data visualisations and content for a travelling digital exhibition.

Undertaking this PhD as part of a larger project has several advantages. First, the successful candidate will be integrated into an already successful research agenda that has been funded by the Australian Research Council, and will have access to funding to support fieldwork, transcription, travel, and conference attendance. Second, the candidate will benefit from expert supervision from research leaders in cultural and media studies, performance studies, and cultural history, and from entering a PhD with a pre-existing structure. Finally, the candidate will benefit from being part of outcomes from the research, which may include co-authored publications (where the candidate's contributions will be recognised through co-authorship), as well as some of the multimedia outputs such as short documentaries and exhibition content, funded symposia, school-engagement exercises, and future grant applications. As the project

partners with Arts Centre Melbourne, the Melbourne International Comedy Festival, the State Libraries of Victoria and South Australia, the Adelaide Festival, the Adelaide Fringe, the South Australian History Trust and media production company Roar Film the successful applicant will benefit from industry experience and be eligible for an internship hosted by one of these partners.

Monash University is the largest university in Australia and regularly ranks in the top 100 universities worldwide. Monash has six globally networked campuses and international alliances in Europe and Asia. The applicant will be based at the Caulfield campus in Melbourne. The School of Media, Film and Journalism (MFJ) where Lead Chief Investigator Tony Moore and Chief Investigator Steve Vizard and the PhD candidate are based has a strong record in ARC funded research, a robust PhD program, and enjoys productive partnerships with government and industry and in publicly accessible outputs such as documentaries. The School of MFJ has established purpose-built studios and editing facilities for translation of research into community-engaged media, spearheading its leadership in digital story-telling research and practice.

Candidate Requirements

The successful applicant will have an excellent academic track record in Media Studies, Cultural Studies, Performance Studies, Humour Studies, Cultural History, or other relevant discipline (e.g., Indigenous Studies, Film Studies, Cultural and Creative Industries, Literary Studies,). The successful candidate will have experience of archive or interview research methods or and evidence of expertise (such as publications or media practice) in one of the above disciplines.

In its assessment, the selection committee will prioritise applicants who hold an Australian (or equivalent international) Honour's or Master's degree (both in a relevant field), with a significant research component and with first-class honours/H1 awarded.

Details of eligibility requirements, including English-language proficiency skills, to undertake a PhD in the Faculty of Arts are available at www.monash.edu/arts/graduate_research/how-to-apply. Applicants should ensure they familiarise themselves with these requirements before deciding whether they should apply.

Scholarship holders must be enrolled full-time and on campus. Please note: applicants who already hold a PhD will not be considered.

The successful applicant will be expected to **enrol by December 2023**. However, there may be some flexibility as to the date of commencement.

Enquiries: Associate Professor Tony Moore, School of Media, Film and Journalism, tony.moore@monash.edu

Submit an Expression of Interest: EOIs shall comprise:

- A cover letter that includes a brief statement of the applicant's suitability
- A brief research proposal not exceeding 750 words in length that fits within the broad project aims and objectives, and demonstrates some understanding of the area of research
- A curriculum vitae, including a list of any published works, conference presentations and relevant work experience
- A full statement of academic record, supported by scanned copies of relevant certified documentation
- English language proficiency test results (if applicable)
- Contact details of two academic referees
- Copy of your current passport (if available)

Once you have discussed your EOI with Associate Professor Tony Moore, please submit your [Expression of Interest Form](#) and indicate that you are applying for a “Special Scholarship Scheme – PhD Scholarship in Australian Performance Comedy as an Agent of Change”.

Shortlisted candidates will be interviewed by Zoom video call. The interviews will be conducted in English.

Closing Date: Wednesday 20 September 2023, 11:55pm AEST

Supporting a diverse workforce

Website: <https://careers.pageuppeople.com/513/cw/en/job/655761/phd-scholarship-in-australian-performance-comedy-as-an-agent-of-change>

Two Reviews of a New Book on John Clarke, Australasian Satirist Extraordinaire, by Clarke’s daughter, Lorin Clarke

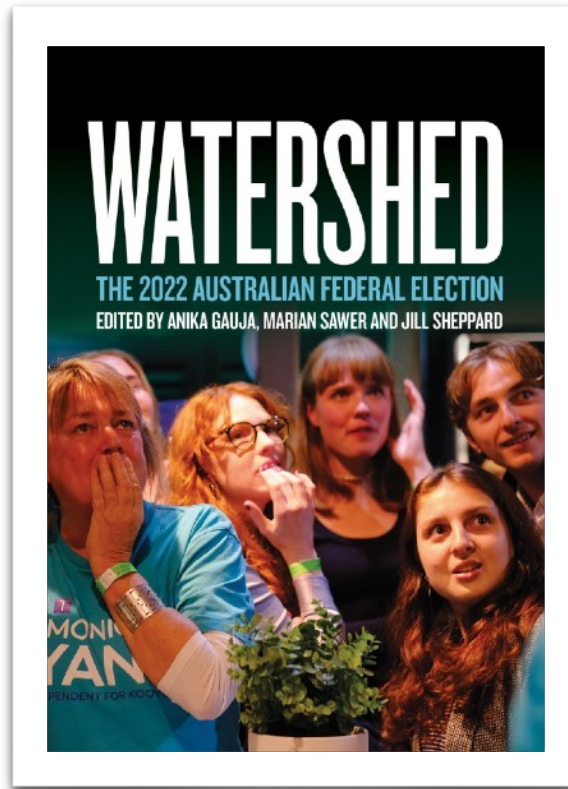


Lorin Clarke. 2023. *Would That Be Funny? Growing Up With John Clarke*. Text Publishing. 288pp.

Robert Phiddian. 2023. Yes, it *is* funny: How the comic genius of John Clarke found its anchor. *The Inside Story (Books)*, 5 September. <https://insidestory.org.au/yes-it-is-funny/>
[See full text of review republished with permission below]

Mathew Ricketson. 2023. Word games, wit and the pleasure of annoying people: A daughter’s memoir sheds new light on the notoriously private John Clarke. *The Conversation*, 31 August. <https://theconversation.com/word-games-wit-and-the-pleasure-of-annoying-people-a-daughters-memoir-sheds-new-light-on-the-notoriously-private-john-clarke-211682>

Cartoons in their campaign context:
New book chapter on cartooning by AHSN members
Dr Lucien Leon and Prof. Richard Scully



<https://press.anu.edu.au/publications/watershed#tabanchor>

Anika Gauja, Marian Sawyer and Jill Sheppard, eds. 2023. ***Watershed: The 2022 Australian Federal Election***. Canberra: ANU Press. ISBN (print): 9781760465810; ISBN (online): 9781760465827. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22459/W.2023>

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- [List of illustrations \(PDF, 0.1MB\)](#)
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- [Contributors \(PDF, 0.1MB\)](#)
- 1. [Watershed: The 2022 Australian federal election \(PDF, 0.5MB\)](#) – Anika Gauja, Marian Sawyer and Jill Sheppard [doi](#)

Part 1: Campaign and context

1. [Administrative issues in a time of Covid \(PDF, 0.4MB\)](#) – Michael Maley [doi](#)
2. [The integrity election: Public trust and the promise of change \(PDF, 0.7MB\)](#) – A.J. Brown [doi](#)
3. [Variants of populism \(PDF, 0.2MB\)](#) – Carol Johnson [doi](#)

4. [High-vis and hard hats versus the care economy \(PDF, 0.7MB\)](#) – Blair Williams and Marian Sawyer [doi](#)
5. [Strategy and leadership in the Labor and Liberal campaigns \(PDF, 1.1MB\)](#) – Glenn Kefford and Stephen Mills [doi](#)
6. [Media coverage of the campaign and the electorate's responses \(PDF, 2.0MB\)](#) – Andrea Carson and Simon Jackman [doi](#)
7. [Talking pictures \(and cartoons, videos, memes, etcetera\) \(PDF, 7.8MB\)](#) – Lucien Leon and Richard Scully [doi](#)

Part 2: Actors

1. [The Australian Labor Party \(PDF, 0.9MB\)](#) – Rob Manwaring and Emily Foley [doi](#)
2. [The Liberal Party of Australia \(PDF, 0.2MB\)](#) – Marija Taflaga [doi](#)
3. [The National Party of Australia \(PDF, 0.4MB\)](#) – Anika Gauja [doi](#)
4. [The Greens' campaign: Google it, mate \(PDF, 0.2MB\)](#) – Stewart Jackson and Josh Holloway [doi](#)
5. [Independents and minor parties \(PDF, 0.3MB\)](#) – Jill Sheppard [doi](#)
6. [The rise and impact of Australia's movement for Community Independents \(PDF, 3.1MB\)](#) – Carolyn M. Hendriks and Richard Reid [doi](#)
7. [Third-party campaigning organisations \(PDF, 0.3MB\)](#) – Ariadne Vromen and Serrin Rutledge-Prior [doi](#)

Part 3: Results

1. [The House of Representatives results \(PDF, 0.8MB\)](#) – Ben Raue [doi](#)
2. [The Senate results \(PDF, 0.5MB\)](#) – Antony Green [doi](#)
3. [Seat-by-seat polling versus the pendulum \(PDF, 0.3MB\)](#) – Murray Goot [doi](#)
4. [The rise and rise of early voting \(PDF, 0.5MB\)](#) – Ferran Martinez i Coma and Rodney Smith [doi](#)

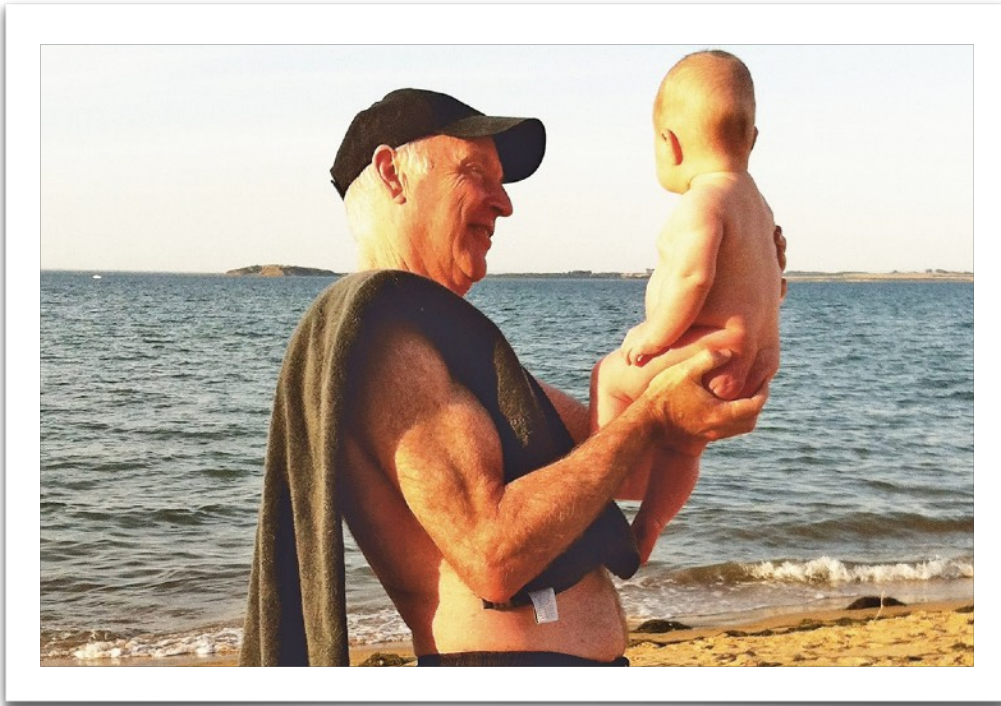
New article by Robert Phiddian on Bruce Petty's Cartoons

Robert Phiddian. 2023. How cartoonist Bruce Petty documented the Vietnam War – and how his great satire keeps finding its moment. *The Conversation*, August 28, 2023.

Open access: <https://theconversation.com/how-cartoonist-bruce-petty-documented-the-vietnam-war-and-how-his-great-satire-keeps-finding-its-moment-208952>

Book review

Robert Phiddian. 2023. *Yes, it is funny. How the comic genius of John Clarke found its anchor.* 2023. *Inside Story (Books)*, 5 September.



“John providing optimal seating arrangements for a grandchild.” *Courtesy of the Clarke family*

Tolstoy was wrong, it appears; a happy family can be utterly distinctive, and Lorin Clarke (hereafter Lorin) writes superbly about hers. People will search out her new book [*Would That Be Funny?*](#) for the light it shines on the comic genius of her father, the guarded, generous, reticent, surgical John Clarke (hereafter John) of happy memory.

Many of us still carry grief from John’s sudden death, seven years ago now, chasing birds in the Grampians. Lorin has more cause for grief than the rest of us, but it just doesn’t seem the right word for so joyous a book. Instead, she has taken the time to create something luminous out of her loss. I read this book while coming down with a cold, and it made me feel a lot better, in heart and mind at least; unfortunately, it didn’t seem to do my chest any good.

The family happiness is real and the product of both experience and fortunate choices. It makes you realise that Tolstoy’s tragic vision is not something John could ever warm to. Come to think of it, impish and ironic minimalism are not among the more obvious characteristics of *War and Peace*. In *Tinkering* (2017) John does *Anna Karenina* in forty-three words, and the great Russian realist gets knocked off in the third round in *The Tournament* (2002), despite a high seeding. It’s a path not taken by the satirist with the twinkle in his eye.

Now Lorin, the elder of John’s two daughters, has her say, and shows that she has arrived as a writer. Her metier is the fragment, supply responsive to local movements of thought and emotion. The remarkable thing is how deftly she deals with sentiment without becoming sentimental, how amusing she can be without becoming (unduly) competitive. The story she has to tell is one of an ensemble, not the more common tale of a towering genius who draws those around him into his vortex.

The central event in the family's story really is the love of a good woman, Helen McDonald, who married John in 1973, reportedly so that she could work in New Zealand. No romantic nonsense in this relationship — just endlessly inventive and competitive play sustained by laconic affection. This was necessary to heal the wounds, and especially the sense of inferiority, that John bore from his parents' rocky relationship. For that, the second world war is to blame.

Neva, John's mother, went to war in Italy as a young secretary and ended up working directly with the major-general commanding the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. Cruelly, she was twice defianced (if that's a word); the second time after hostilities were supposed to have ceased. She returned to New Zealand, married Ted *faute de mieux*. Like a many talented women of her generation, she discovered that she was supposed to rejoice in the life of a housewife, and forget that she had ever had other aspirations or capacities. She loved her children, but came to hate the suburban life.

Ted, meanwhile, was a successful and bottled-up retailer, disinclined to talk much about the years he had spent fighting Rommel, or to show much feeling about anything. He was also hard on his eldest son, John, who spent a couple of decades convinced he was never going to measure up. Ted and Neva's marriage did not last, but long after the divorce, as Nevana and "the White Furry Fellow," they got over the wounds and discovered separate talents as loyal and quizzical grandparents.

The crucial plot-point came when John met Helen and her warm and supportive family, especially parents Charlie Boy and Gina de Babe (nomenclature is mostly for playing with in Clarke-world; the book comes with a useful glossary). Without this happy turn of fate there would have been no Fred Dagg and John may well have been just a funny bloke who remained a bit tortured and never amounted to much. With Helen and her family, his comic talent had found an anchor in a hyper-verbal but emotionally warm world. Some humourists seem to need the spur of insecurity to create, and a few wreak havoc in their private lives for fear of losing the creative spark. Not John and Helen.

Their warm homes in Greensborough and Fitzroy welcomed friends and extended family, then two daughters Lorin and Lucia ("the sisterhood" as far as they are concerned, and the inspiration for John's "Federated Under Tens"). The only battles seem to have been over the best way of framing words: "A topic our father could speak about for hours was how helpful *form* could be when writing something. By form he meant format, schema, structure, configuration, style, even genre. Sports scores. A news report. A legal letter. Furniture assembly instructions."

Expression was always about craft in John's work, and parody was a primary move in pretty much everything. The energy came from a sure inner compass straining against the automatic words of fools or the devious rhetoric of knaves. From Fred Dagg's broad accents to the arcane terminology of farnarkeling and the two minutes and forty-six seconds of the *Clarke and Dawe* episodes, form was fundamental — not quite more important than delivering a message about fools and knaves, but utterly co-dependent. He'd have hated the job description of content-creator, because content is just stuff until you find the shape that belongs to it.

The business of writing for John and Lorin is not to cover things up, but to pierce their real significance. If you seek to understand the corruption of corporatised sport, can you do any better than this?

MR WILSON: So you've measured the track?
JOHN: Yes, we've measured the track, Mr Wilson.
MR WILSON: So you know how long the 100-metre track is?
JOHN: Yes, we do.
MR WILSON: Okay.
JOHN: How long is it, Mr Wilson?
MR WILSON: You *know* how long it is.
JOHN: I want to hear you say it.
MR WILSON: Ninety-four metres. (*The Games*)

This is the pure and precise anger of John's satire, focused laser-like on the sin and its systemic sources in human weakness, while being almost gentle on the sinner. Could anyone really resent being caught up in his apt contempt? It has the detachment of justice and none of the animus that drove, say, Barry Humphries' genius for comic disgust. John as satirist is the tolerant uncle who lets you know that you've fallen short. Maybe you will do better next time.

And we miss him. Imagine what he would have made of Morrison of the many ministries!

Meanwhile, in *Would That Be Funny?*, Lorin has found the right form to tell the family story. She mixes fragments of intimacy, blocks of narrative in far from rigorous chronological order, found documents, and many lists. The book is nearly always funny, apart from when it is suddenly intense, nearly always kind and celebratory, except when it is emotionally ruthless. It dances on the tightrope of tone that memoir demands, and succeeds with vim and lucidity. She grants us entry to a family of super-intelligent and playful eccentrics strangely like the aunts and uncles in the most perfect item in the *Complete Book of Australian Verse*, "A Child's Christmas in Warrnambool."

Might *Would That Be Funny?* work for readers who do not know and love the works of the father? I can't say, because my powers of detachment cannot take me that far outside the memory of John. But I think the book might just be good enough to lead new audiences to his works. It is certainly a treat if you miss that weekly moment of sanity on the *7.30 Report*.

The Clarkes' humour is polished to a fine edge, but it welcomes anyone who wants to laugh with those who dream of a juster and kinder world. One paragraph nails that:

The sisterhood regarded Dad as the Great Relaxer. Always zooming out on the picture and reminding us we'd be okay. He'd make me snort with laughter on my way to an exam I was terrified I'd fail. He'd say, "We still love you if you fail, you know. I don't want to boast but I'm the clubhouse leader when it comes to failing stuff."

When Beckett writes "Fail better" it comes through as a grim admonition. The Clarkes can make the same advice sparkle.

John's genius was, often, for stopping. He did it in life as well. Many of us miss him, but none as deeply as the happy family he left behind. That is clear on every page this fine and amusing memoir.

As an admirer of your father's work, as a father of daughters, as a believer in the resilience good humour can give us, I just want to say, "Well played, Lorin."

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Review of New Musical, *The Dismissal*

Sydney Season September-October, Seymour Centre

Michelle Arrow, Macquarie University. 'An extremely serious musical comedy' about Whitlam? Yes. *The Dismissal* is great fun, witty and sharply observed. *The Conversation*, 6 September 2023

The Whitlam government has a mythical status in the Australian popular imagination. While it lasted less than two full terms between December 1972 and November 1975, it has had an outsized cultural presence ever since.

This is not just because of Gough Whitlam's transformative social democratic agenda, but because of the way his government ended: [the dismissal](#) remains one of the most shocking events in Australian political history.



Octavia Barron Martin invests Sir John Kerr with a touch of pathos and **Peter Carroll** is uproarious as Sir Garfield Barwick. Squabbalogic/David Hooley

Each year since, we have marked the anniversary with new stories, new angles, new details. The story has all the ingredients of high drama – indeed, the story was told in a rather ponderous television [mini-series](#) in 1983.

So almost 50 years on, what to make of a comedic musical retelling of these tumultuous events?

Norman Gunston (a superb Matthew Whittet) guides the audience through the story and sets the tone for the show.



Matthew Whittet is superb as Norman Gunston. Squabbalogic/David Hooley



Georgie Bolton as Rex Connor is spectacularly, hilariously crude. Squabbalogic/David Hooley

Extract only; read the full review at: <https://theconversation.com/an-extremely-serious-musical-comedy-about-whitlam-yes-the-dismissal-is-great-fun-witty-and-sharply-observed-212965>

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