

AUSTRALASIAN HUMOUR SCHOLARS NETWORK

2008 INVITATIONAL COLLOQUIUM

**with Post-Graduate Section
on Humour Research**

“Boundaries and Borders of Humour”

(Special Focus on Cross-cultural Issues)

HELD AT

WOMENS COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th February 2008

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PROGRAM

SATURDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2008

- 9.00 – 9.20 am (Main Common Room) *Registration; Tea and Coffee***
- 9.25 – 9.30 **Welcome:** Dr Jessica Milner Davis, Convenor
- 9.30 – 10.00 **Prof. Carmen Moran**, Psychology, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga
Revisiting Humour Research: Promises, Pitfalls, and Progress in 2008
- 10.00 – 10.30 **Assoc. Prof. Haydon Manning**, Political Studies, & Assoc. Prof. Robert Phiddian, English and Cultural Studies, Flinders University
Election Campaign 2007 – The Editorial Cartoonists' View
- 10.30 – 11.00 **Dr Michael Hogan**, Hon. Associate, Government & International Relations, University of Sydney, *Discussant for Election Campaign 2007*
- 11.00 – 11.25 am (Dining Room) *Morning Refreshments***
- 11.30 – 12.00 **Mr Will Noonan**, PhD (Cotutelle) Candidate, English, University of Sydney/UFR Lettres Modernes, Université de Provence
Inappropriate Historicism: Humour as a Reflexive Marker of Boundaries and Borders
- 12.00 – 12.30 **Ms Deborah Klika**, MA Research Student, Performance Studies, UNSW
Laughing from Within the 'Frame'
- 12.45 – 1.40 pm (Dining Room) *Lunch***
- 1.45 – 2.15 **Dr Marguerite Wells**, Independent Scholar [*Japanese Humour* (1997)]
Local Potency and the Comedy of Bad Language in English and Japanese
- 2.15 – 2.45 **Assoc. Prof. Michael Ewans FAAH**, Drama, Fine Art, and Music, University of Newcastle
Political Venom and 'Obscenity' in 'Knights', by Aristophanes
- 2.45 – 3.15 **Dr Mike Lloyd**, Sociology & Social Policy, Victoria University of Wellington
"Carefully Place a Condor on Your Penis ...": The Socio-logics of Penis-injury Humour
- 3.15 – 3.40 pm (Dining Room) *Afternoon Tea***
- 3.45 – 4.15 **Dr Bruce Findlay**, Psychology, Swinburne University of Technology
Sense of Humour and Interpersonal Conflict
- 4.15 – 4.45 **Dr David Rawlings/Julian Fernando**, Psychology, University of Melbourne
Can the Negative Relationship between Fundamentalist Religious Belief and Sense of Humour be Explained by their Common Connections to Personality?
- 4.45 – 5.15 **Mr Adam Salicki**, Ballarat Health Services, & **Dr Angus McLachlan**, Psychology, University of Ballarat
"You've got to Laugh." Possible Benefits of Self-defeating Humour
- 5.15 – 5.45 **Dr Jessica Milner Davis**, Hon. Associate, Arts, University of Sydney
Gelotophobia (the Fear of Being Laughed): Australian Data in a Multi-nation Study
- 5.45 pm (Verandah, WWP) *Pre-dinner Refreshments – Optional Dinner Arrangements***

PROGRAM: SUNDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2008

8.30 – 8.55 am *Welcome Tea and Coffee*

Parallel Session A (Main Common Room):

- 9.00 – 9.30 **Ms Heather Crawford**, PhD candidate/Assoc. Lecturer, Marketing, UNSW
*Investigating Humour in Cross-cultural Advertising: An Individual
Difference Perspective*
- 9.30 – 10.00 **Mrs Maren Rawlings**, PhD candidate in Psychology, Swinburne University
of Technology
*The Humour at Work (HAW) Scale: How it was Constructed and How it will
be Validated*
- 10.00 – 10.30 **Ms Naomi Knight**, PhD candidate in Linguistics, University of Sydney
*Laughing our Bonds Off: Conversational Humour as Deferral in the Process
of Affiliation*

Parallel Session B (Fairfax Common Room):

- 9.00 – 9.30 **Ms Sylvia Alston**, PhD candidate in Communication and Education,
University of Canberra
That's not Funny: the Use of Humour in Fiction to Tell a Painful Story
- 9.30 – 10.00 **Dr Peter Spitzer (aka Dr Fruit-Loop)**, Medical Director, Co-founder,
Humour Foundation
*Evaluating and Progressing the LaughterBoss Program in Aged and
Dementia Care*
- 10.00 – 10.30 Discussion

10.30 – 10.55 (Dining Room) *Morning Refreshments*

Parallel Session A (Main Common Room):

- 11.00 – 11.30 **Ms Susan Steggall**, PhD candidate in Creative Writing/English, UNSW
Stirring the Possum in Australian Art History
- 11.30 – 12.00 **Mr Lindsay Foyle**, Cartoon Historian, Pocket Cartoonist for *The Australian
Tales from Australian Cartooning: The True History of 'Ginger Meggs'*
- 12.00 – 12.30 **Dr Birte Giesler**, Dept of Germanic Studies/Study of Languages and
Cultures, University of Sydney
*Testing the Boundaries of Humour by Transgressing Cultural Borders: the
European-Australian 'Culture Clash' in Urs Widmer's 'Liebesbrief für Mary
(Love letter for Mary)'*
- 12.30 – 12.45 Discussion

Parallel Session B (Fairfax Common Room):

- 11.00 – 11.30 **Dr Wolfgang Zoubek** (Univ. of Vienna), German Language & Theatre,
Wenzao Ursuline College for Foreign Languages, Kaohsiung, Taiwan
Noda Hideki's Comedies

11.30 – 12.00 **Dr Paul Jewell**, Education, Flinders University
Musical Jokes in Contemporary Popular Genres

12.00 – 12.45 **Dr Ruth Wajnryb**, Director, LARA – Language & Research Associates
Jokes as a Window on Discomfort: A Look at the Mental Health Profession

12.45 – 1.40 pm (Dining Room) Lunch

Parallel Session A:

1.45 – 2.15 **Dr Andrew Hopkins**, QE II Fellow, Institute of Astronomy, University of Sydney
The Universe is a Funny Place: the Humour of Astrophysicists

2.15 – 2.45 **Ms Mira Crouch**, Visiting Fellow, Social Science and International Studies, UNSW
Wit and its Vicissitudes

Parallel Session B (workshop):

1.45 – 2.45 **Mr Anton Crouch**, Hon. Visiting Fellow, Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences, UNSW
Laughing Records – a Preliminary Classification

2.45 – 3.10 (Dining Room) Afternoon Tea

3.15 – 3.25 **Hon. Prof. Michael Carter**, Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Sydney
Introduction

3.25 – 3.55 **Dr Tanveer Ahmed**, Psychiatry Registrar, Writer and Comedian
Islam and Humour- Oxymoron or Not!

3.55 – 4.25 **Dr Mark Rolfe**, Social Science & International Studies, UNSW.
Cartoons That Are Danish – Not Such Sweet Confections?

4.25 – 4.55 **Hon. Prof. Michael Carter**, Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Sydney
Discussant

4.55 – 5.15 Conference and Poster Reports

5.15 Refreshments and Departure

ABSTRACTS OF REVIEWED PAPERS

Dr Tanveer Ahmed, Psychiatry Registrar, Writer, Comedian

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Islam and Humour - Oxymoron or Not!

There is always ongoing controversy within Islamic societies with regard to the extent of individual expression that is permissible. In particular, the arts and humour circles are heavily regulated with an attitude that Islam does not permit images of the prophet or God. Furthermore, there is a general belief that humour relating to religion is inherently offensive. As a result, local traditions of humour and comedy have often come under attack as extremist Islam has taken greater root in many countries around the world. For example, Bangladesh's long tradition of satire is currently being threatened with the rise of radical Muslim groups.

I will look at the history of humour within Islamic societies but then focus on how it may have affected local traditions of comedy with a particular emphasis on South Asia.

Hon. Prof. Michael Carter, Dept of Arabic, Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Sydney

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Discussant for Islam and Humour

Dr David Rawlings and Mr Julian Fernando, Psychology, University of Melbourne

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Can the Negative Relationship between Fundamentalist Religious Belief and Sense of Humour be Explained by their Common Connections to Personality?

Several articles by the Belgian psychologist Vassilis Saroglou have argued, from both historical and empirical perspectives, for a negative relationship between sense of humour and certain forms of religious belief. Saroglou has further argued that this relationship may be due to the connection of both humour and religion to common personality constructs. We briefly review the model and the evidence for it. A study is described in which measures of three commonly differentiated religious orientations (intrinsic, extrinsic and quest) and a measure of religious fundamentalism are related to Ziv's sense of humour questionnaire in a group of 245 undergraduate students. Measures of two personality variables, Openness to Experience and Sensation Seeking, were also administered. It was found that sense of humour was negatively correlated with religious fundamentalism and that the relationship could be substantially explained by their common connection to Sensation Seeking.

Mr Anton Crouch, Hon. Visiting Fellow, Biological, Earth & Environmental Sciences, UNSW

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Laughing Records – a Preliminary Classification

The earliest commercial gramophone recordings, from the 1890s, include 'laughing records' – performers singing and/or laughing, usually with musical accompaniment. The African-American singer George W Johnson (1846-1914) was a pioneer in this field and the maturity of his performances raises the question 'what are the antecedents of this type of recording'. Opera? English music-hall? American vaudeville? Minstrel show? French chansonette?

After noting William Blake's poem, 'Laughing song' (1789) and the prevalence of laughing in opera, this workshop will begin with an aural overview of the extant recorded material – from Johnson in the early 1900s to Joyce Grenfell in 1952. As part of this overview the

audience will be asked to assess a matrix which treats the data (ie the recordings) as biological taxa. Along the way, there will be a lot of laughter! The classificatory and phylogenetic significance of the matrix will then be interactively discussed.

Ms Mira Crouch, Visiting Fellow, Social Science and International Studies, UNSW

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Wit and its Vicissitudes

This paper pursues the concept of *wit* in contradistinction to *humour* with reference to Freud's *Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious* – or, more recently, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*. *Wit* is indeed a better term for the thrust of Freud's analysis – an analysis which is generally oversimplified in accounts of 'theories of humour'. And yet there are in his work subtleties concerning both the linguistic structure of witticisms and the impetus for their expression. The latter is an aspect of fun-making that is overlooked in modern humorology. In psychology eg 'stimulus' represents the comic object; what is lacking here, however, is awareness of the prior question about the stimulus's occurring at all (other than in the lab). But Freud does tackle this issue, which is really the problem of how humour (in general) comes about; in other words, what are the human species/being attributes that make humour *be*? By restricting inquiry to wit, I hope to formulate a few tentative propositions – as well as further questions. I acknowledge the risk in such a project; in the end, it might turn out that I should have observed the dictum: 'A closed mouth gathers no foot'.

Assoc. Prof. Michael Ewans FAAH, Drama, Fine Art, and Music, University of Newcastle

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Political Venom and 'Obscenity' in 'Knights', by Aristophanes

This paper discusses *Knights*, a play which is unique in the history of comedy for its sustained and merciless attack on Kleon, who was Athens' leading politician at the time of the first performance, and was sitting in a front-row seat of honour as Aristophanes' attack on him unfolded. (In most modern western democracies the laws of libel and slander protect our politicians from any comparable assault on their dignity - and their policies!)

An important element in Aristophanes is what we call 'obscenity'; it is clear that Athenian fifth century comedy had licence not only to attack or satirize anyone, but also to refer to sexuality and excretion with a freedom not granted to playwrights in any subsequent society. This paper will examine Aristophanes' modes of attack on Kleon, and the ways in which *Knights* tests the boundaries of humour. Extracts from the writer's new translation of *Knights* will be used to illustrate the paper.

Dr Bruce Findlay, Psychology, Swinburne University of Technology

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Sense of Humour and Interpersonal Conflict

This paper presents the results of two studies examining the role of sense of humour in dealing with interpersonal conflict. The first involved an international web-based sample of 192 people (mean age 27) who reported their stress after a specific conflict with a specific person and their sense of humour, measured using Martin et al.'s (2003) Humour Styles Inventory. Humour did not seem to buffer these participants from the effects of the conflict. The second study involved a sample of convenience of 111 people from metropolitan Melbourne (mean age 36) who described their own and their partner's conflict style and sense of humour using Koning and Weiss's (2002) Relational Humour Inventory. It is expected that this may provide a different perspective. The paper will discuss the merits of measuring sense of humour in these ways.

Mr Lindsay Foyle, Cartoonist, Cartoon Historian, Pocket Cartoonist for *The Australian*.
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Tales from Australian Cartooning: The True History of 'Ginger Meggs'

Most Australian cartoon historians would have you believe that Australia's longest running comic strip, *Ginger Meggs*, was created by artist Jimmy Bancks, and was first published on November 13, 1921. The truth is very different. The name of the comic was not *Ginger Meggs*; in fact Ginger Meggs was not even in the comic; nor did Jimmy Bancks, nor even Ethel Turner as some people claim, create it. However it was first published on November 13, 1921.

Accuracy in establishing the details of Australia's rich cartooning history is essential in a field which rapidly tends to become folklore. As political and cultural historians increasingly turn to the subject of humour in their studies, cartoons become an important source of factual evidence about social attitudes and concepts. Getting the facts right is indispensable.

Dr Birte Giesler, Dept of Germanic Studies/SLC, University of Sydney

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Testing the boundaries of humour by transgressing cultural border: the European-Australian 'culture clash' in Urs Widmer's 'Liebesbrief für Mary (Love letter for Mary)'

Urs Widmer's *Liebesbrief für Mary* is a comic novella on a Swiss-British-Australian love triangle. The text is for the most part written in Australian-German pidgin English. Cross-culturality and cross-language issues are a crucial part of the humour in the text. Focusing on the transgression of geographical, cultural and mental boundaries, *Liebesbrief für Mary* makes traditional metaphors and images of colonial literature a subject of irony. Using humour and irony, the text challenges the boundaries of political correctness and aesthetical conventions.

The paper will focus on Widmer's humorous depiction of the specific 'white' continental European perspective on Australia. It will investigate how its depiction of Australia is related to the general colonial discourse on foreign countries and the savage. In particular, the paper will analyse how *Liebesbrief für Mary* challenges the boundaries of humour by ironically undermining the European image of Australia as a 'close-to-nature Aboriginal country' and a 'boundlessly multi-cultural paradise down under'.

Dr Andrew Hopkins, QE II Fellow, Institute of Astronomy, University of Sydney

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The Universe is a Funny Place: The Humour of Astrophysicists

Professional astrophysicists appear to include a disproportionately large fraction of very good science communicators, compared to other science disciplines. Humour, of course, is one of the ways we keep our presentations entertaining and, hopefully, helps to illuminate the points we wish to convey. Selected examples of how astronomers use humour to engage their audience will be presented, provided courtesy of many professional astrophysicists. I have two aims: (1) illustrating a variety of techniques, through examples, to provide material that may be of interest to the study of humour in science and science communication; and (2) providing an initial point of reference from which to engage the professional humour community in interdisciplinary research.

Dr Michael Hogan, Hon. Associate, Government and International Relations, University of Sydney

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Discussant for Election Campaign 2007 – The Editorial Cartoonists' View

Dr Paul Jewell, Education, Flinders University

E-mail: Paul.Jewell@flinders.edu.au

Musical Jokes in Contemporary Popular Genres

Discussion of art works may refer to the form or genre of the work, such as portrait or novel or opera. Alternatively, discussion may refer to content or subject, such as the Mona Lisa, Oliver Twist, or Carmen. Similarly, examples of humour may be categorised as riddles or satires, say, but might alternatively have significant subjects, such as lawyers, lovers or politicians. Disentangling the form from the content may present problems in any particular work, but concepts of harmony or incongruity nevertheless exist abstractly.

Musical jokes are rare, and satisfactory analysis of them is elusive. Typically they rely on amusing lyrics, or on parody of an existing work, or even both. Yet music, of all the arts, consists of form, rather than content. Judgements about genre, style and geographical origin can be made after only a few seconds of listening. Some examples of musical humour in contemporary popular genres illustrate interesting interplay between form and content.

Dr Mike Lloyd, Sociology & Social Policy, Victoria University of Wellington

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“Carefully Place a Condor on Your Penis ...”: The Socio-logics of Penis-injury Humour

In our culture, as many commentators have argued, the penis is either hidden from sight or its representation is carefully regulated. Pornography is a different but related case: clearly, it is monitored and regulated, but it features the phallus, not the penis. Additionally, it can be argued that the permitted representations of the penis reflect the same ideological purpose as pornography - maintaining male power over women. Intriguingly, Stephens has recently argued that there is a consistent pattern in the images of the ‘spectacularised penis’ that are allowed to circulate through popular culture with minimum restriction: the penis will be humiliated, tortured or laughed at (often, all three). This paper picks up this interesting observation about torture, focussing on what we can generically call ‘penis-injury humour’. The goal is to begin unpacking the ‘socio-logics’ of this humour: what is the range and variety of such humour; who makes it with what purpose; what theories exist; and where could this realm of inquiry be further developed. The general intent will be to reflect upon these ‘socio-logics’ with reference to empirical material, including extracts from literature, internet humour, and a New Zealand corpus of dick jokes (*The Adventures of Naked Man*). I hope to show that, as with all things social, apparently simple things are sometimes the most baffling, requiring a case by case approach rather than any blunt, overarching theory.

Assoc. Prof. Haydon Manning, Political Studies, and Assoc. Prof. Robert Phiddian, English and Cultural Studies, Flinders University

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Election Campaign 2007 – The Editorial Cartoonists’ View

This paper represents another chapter in Manning and Phiddian’s study of elections campaign cartooning which begun with the 1996 election. Akin to islands set against a sea of words, editorial cartoons frequently capture the essence of any given national election campaign’s ebb and flow. They often contradict their newspaper’s editorial line and front page banner headline, as was the case in 2001. For readers’ keen to recall our leaders’ jousting and promising to deliver paradise, this study recalls the issues thrown up by each day of ‘official’ campaigning in 2007 and observes how the cartoonists sought to expose the hollowness of the ‘spin doctors’. Notwithstanding the occasional savage satirical moment, the cartoonists work in 2007 was, at all times, are a reminder of the robustness of liberal democracy in Australia.

Dr Jessica Milner Davis, Hon. Associate, Letters, Art and Media, University of Sydney

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Gelotophobia: Australian Data in a Multi-nation Study of the Fear of Being Laughed at.

Gelotophobics (possessing a pathological fear of appearing an object of ridicule to social partners) tend excessively to believe others are constantly evaluating them for ridiculousness and thus fear being exposed to laughter. The phenomenon was first described in German case studies by clinical psychologist Michael Titze. This fear was shown more frequently than expected in 2003 empirical studies in Germany, Austria and Switzerland (2000+ participants,

Ruch and Proyer), in England (Platt, author of Ridicule Teasing Scenario questionnaire RTSq, 2006) and in Italy (Forabosco). Ruch and Titze developed and validated a self-report questionnaire (Ruch 1998) for international use.

Recent studies show different “national prevalences”, ranging from 3% Gelotophobics, to 15% plus, without age, gender, or class differences. In 2007, studies were undertaken at UNSW (Cranney, Milner Davis and Thomas) and University of Melbourne (David Rawlings). Other countries include Japan (2 samples), Taiwan (2), India (3), USA (4), Malawi, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Chile (1 each). Ruch’s collation of international results is forthcoming in 2008. This paper reports Australian questionnaire adaptations (comprehensibility and multi-cultural background) and initial results. Possible applications include bullying, workplace relations, clinical and forensic psychology.

Prof. Carmen Moran, Psychology, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga
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Revisiting Humour Research: Promises, Pitfalls, and Progress in 2008

This paper revisits an earlier paper of mine and argues the need for a more than usual self-consciously rigorous approach to scholarship on humour. Many people might proclaim that it is self-evident that humour is good for us. The use of humour in areas such as health and education however requires justification based on more than our assumptions. Research is necessary to test specific claims about the benefits of humour. This approach means we must also consider the negative aspects of humour, including its potential to harm. It means that we must not accept a lower standard of scrutiny about evidence than we would expect in other areas of scholarship.

As has often been noted in this conference-series, publications on humour too often have been characterized by positive bias, zealous over-interpretations of research outcomes, and unabashed declarations of scientific proof based simply on the use of physiological measures. The larger part of research work on humour is indeed solid, with promising results. In fact the rate of humour research has grown considerably in Australia, as well as in the rest of the world. This paper looks at the promises, pitfalls, and progress in humour research, using some of my own and others’ research on humour, especially in health and education. At the same time, this paper encourages scholars to continue to enjoy humour for its own sake occasionally, without the need to quantify every effect.

Dr Mark Rolfe, Social Science & International Studies, UNSW
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Cartoons That Are Danish – Not Such Sweet Confections?

There is a long history of satirists upsetting authorities with attacks on taboos on behalf of courageous convictions. However, we should not always take the satirists’ claims at face value, as this paper demonstrates with reactions to the Danish cartoons in 2006. This controversy began with local factors connected to the problems of majorities and minorities that afflict all democracies and not all the cartoons were about the Prophet Mohammed. Yet the event escalated beyond Denmark and those local factors to encompass claims of freedom of speech (confusing restraint with censorship), the war on terror, and decline of the West. Some unfavourably compared Islamic reactions to Christian reactions to *Life of Brian*. Yet these Islamic and Christian reactions, along with Israeli reactions to a cartoon during the first intifada, had in common anger at departures from ritualised depictions of sacred topics.

Mr Adam Salicki, Ballarat Health Services, and Dr Angus McLachlan, Psychology, University of Ballarat
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“You’ve got to laugh.” Possible benefits of self-defeating humour.

Martin maintained that self-defeating humour was not a style that lent itself to good

psychological health. While this may be true generally, it remains possible that certain groups of people may find solace in making light of their predicament. Forty one elderly individuals from three residential care facilities in Melbourne completed Martin's Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) and measures of stress and their preferred means of coping with life's difficulties. It was found that of the four humour styles identified in the HSQ, self-defeating humour was the only humour style that correlated significantly with stress: the *more* self-defeating humour the resident used, the *less* stress he or she reported. Self-defeating humour also correlated highly with the measure of coping through humour. These results strongly suggest that for populations who are not in a position to do anything practical about a difficult situation, presenting themselves in a humorous way is tantamount to feeling better about life.

Dr Peter Spitzer (aka Dr Fruit-Loop), Medical Director, Co-founder, Humour Foundation

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Evaluating and Progressing the LaughterBoss Program in Aged and Dementia Care

With increasing (and unmet) requests for Clown Doctors to visit aged care facilities, the author developed the LaughterBoss concept (presented at *The First National Conference on Depression in Aged Care: "Challenging Depression in Aged Care"* at UNSW, Sydney, June 2003). LaughterBoss has also been presented in USA, Canada and Europe.

The LaughterBoss is a modern day equivalent of the court jester. His main role is to bring play, humour and laughter into a health facility, originating from the philosophy that laughter is the best medicine. While the main focus of the LaughterBoss is on the residents, a positive impact on staff, visitors and the general community has been reported. The LaughterBoss can reduce staff stress and improve morale as well as assist staff to better meet residents' quality of life and psychosocial needs. A Central Coast Department of Health study that evaluated the program and the impact on attendees will be presented and overseas programs reviewed.

Dr Ruth Wajnryb, Director, LARA – Language & Research Associates

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Jokes as a Window on Discomfort: A Look at the Mental Health Profession

This workshop brings together two notions. The first is what we know from research and personal experience - that humour helps people cope with the tribulations life throws at them. The second is that jokes tend to group in clusters. For instance, your typical mother-in-law joke is different, semantically if not structurally, from your typical dentist joke. The nexus of the two notions – humour-for-coping and joke groupings – should, at least in principle, yield some interesting insights. The premise is that it should be possible to construct a picture of a particular profession by the kind of jokes that it attracts. In the hot seat for the purposes of this paper is psychiatry and more generally, mental health therapists of various persuasions.

Collaboratively, the presenter and participants in this workshop will milk a collection of conventional 'shrink' jokes, broadly from a Western English-speaking context. Technology allowing, snippets will be viewed from the very contemporary show, *HELP*, the BBC comedy featuring two men in a room – a psychiatrist and an assortment, in turn, of his patients. The goal is to address the question: what do jokes about mental health professionals tell us about both the joker's target, and the joker?

Dr Marguerite Wells, Independent Scholar, Author of *Japanese Humour* (1997)

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Local Potency and the Comedy of Bad Language in English and Japanese

Taboos govern the limits of humour and the limits of language. Bad language is a standard tool of comedians. The central problem of bad language for practical linguists in using foreign languages is local potency - the shock effect that does not translate across two languages. This paper considers categories of bad language in Japanese and English and how they rather

signally fail, in general, to correspond. To discuss bad language is to mine a rich vein of humour, as is demonstrated by *Language Most Foul* (Wajnryb 2004).

Dr Wolfgang Zoubek (formerly University of Vienna), Prof of German Language and Theatre, Wenzao Ursuline College for Foreign Languages, Kaohsiung, Taiwan
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Noda Hideki's Comedies

My paper is an introduction to the humour in the work of Noda Hideki, a well-known Japanese theater practitioner, who has become very famous since the late seventies with his troop *Yume no Yûminsha* ('The Dream Wanderers'). He has produced fiction plays in the style of modern fairy-tales and in this way in the 80s became one of the leading representatives of Japanese contemporary theater. But in the 90s he changed his themes and in contrast with other Japanese theater stars of the 80s, he continues nowadays to be just as successful as before. Today however he no longer works with his old theatre troop, he produces his performances within the commercial production system. I will comment on the humorous themes of his plays in both phases of his work.

POST-GRADUATE PRESENTERS

Ms Sylvia Alston, PhD candidate, Communication and Education, University of Canberra
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That's not funny: the use of humour in fiction to tell a painful story

Fiction can sometimes be the only way to tell a true story, especially when that story is personal, traumatic, or both. The findings of a research project have been used as the basis for a work of realistic fiction to illustrate the ways in which people use humour to help them cope in painful and traumatic situations. One of the protagonists in the story is a single mother whose only child has terminal cancer. This scenario was chosen as the framework for the creative piece because it is possibly the most traumatic and painful experience for families and friends, as well as for people caring for them. Not only is the use of humour an integral part of the creative piece, it also provides some breathing space between some of the more traumatic scenes.

Examples from this creative work, and other works of mainstream and young adult literature, will be used to illustrate the ways humour is used in fiction to tell a painful story.

Ms Heather Crawford, PhD candidate/Assoc. Lecturer, Marketing, UNSW
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Investigating Humour in Cross-cultural Advertising: An Individual Difference Perspective.

Humour is frequently used as an advertising appeal; however its effects are not well understood. Numerous theories have been developed to define humour and explain how it works. Previous research gives evidence that humorous appeals based on incongruity-resolution are universal. However, responses to humour may vary based on individual differences including need for cognition and need for humour.

Measures of the effectiveness of humour in advertising have been tested extensively within a national context, but little work has been published on the use of these measures in a cross-cultural context. The impact of culture on response to humour in advertising will be tested at both individual-level and culture-level.

This paper undertakes to compare the frequency of use of humorous appeals in three countries, and to measure the effectiveness of those appeals. The research will attempt to determine which elements of a humorous advertising campaign can be standardised across cultures, while retaining comparable levels of effectiveness.

Ms Deborah Klika, MA Research Student in Performance Studies, UNSW
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Laughing from Within the 'Frame'

This paper will look at TV narrative comedy and its use of humour in exposing a social 'frame'. My recent area of focus has been the comic operation of the character in three programs which span a multicultural discourse: *Acropolis Now* (1989), *Kath & Kim* (2003) and *Pizza* (2005); in particular how the character is placed, or place themselves, in opposition to, or in relation to, a situation – their 'struggle' – resulting in a comic 'degradation'. I will explore Umberto Eco's reading of Freud's theory of humour which argues that true comic freedom exposes previously unseen social frames, and thus enables transformation. My purpose is to see if, in this form of comedy, we can 'see' a previously unseen, or even known, social frame being exposed through a character's 'struggle'; further to discuss what relevance such insight may have in determining 'sites' of struggle, and how such readings can be articulated and utilised.

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Laughing our Bonds off: Conversational Humour as Deferral in the Process of Affiliation

In groups of friends, laughter is a pervasive phenomenon, and often marks an exclusive kind of humour that only the participants might 'get'. As casual conversation is an interpersonally-oriented genre of discourse (Eggins and Slade 1997) with a prosody of evaluative meaning (cf. Martin 2002: 59), it is not surprising that 'conversational humour' involves a negotiation of attitude between social persons. Friends present their shared and unshared values or 'bonds' to build solidarity by laughing off semiotic 'wrinkles' between them, and it is often difficult to interpret the humour without the intimate sharing of these values in communities. A discourse analysis of audio recorded conversations among Canadian friends will incorporate the Appraisal theory (Martin and White 2005) of evaluative meanings and an analysis of laughter in a Systemic Functional linguistic framework, to focus on how bonds are constantly and implicitly shared and laughed off through humour to create a shared identity, and why participants find this type of humour funny. This thesis will show how conversational humour functions as a tool for negotiating the complexity of social networking and solidarity between persons based on a process of affiliation.

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Inappropriate Historicism: Humour as a Reflexive Marker of Boundaries and Borders

The recent "Danish Cartoons" controversy has re-kindled debate about the limits of humour in public discourse, about what may be considered humorous, for whom, and whether and where to impose boundaries on forms of expression such as satire and caricature. However, humour itself can be read as a type of boundary or border. While we are never likely to reach a complete or satisfactory definition, the domain of humour might be said to reside in an uneasy zone between the excessively normal, polite and conventional, and the excessively obscure, offensive or incongruous. In this sense, an appreciation of humour can prove a type of insight, necessarily subjective and fragmentary, into the norms and values associated with the different contexts in which it is played out.

Building on examples from French and English metafiction (Sterne, Diderot, Flann O'Brien, Samuel Beckett), this paper seeks to explore how the reflexive quality of humour can facilitate readings across historical and cultural contexts, in a manner analogous to the New Historicist project of attempting to recreate "what can only be glimpsed, as it were, at the margins of a text." This perspective may seem far removed from the Danish cartoons, but an analysis of reactions to this controversy in the French and English media highlights the productive tension between reading humour in the abstract and historicising the present.

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The Humour at Work (HAW) Scale: How it was Constructed and How it will be Validated.

A 'sense of humour' is important to the individual in terms of health e.g. Cousins (1979) and well-being, e.g. Carver, Pozo, Harris, Noriega, Scieher, Robinson, Ketcham, Moffat & Clark (1993). Current measures of sense of humour for the individual are global in nature (e.g. HSQ – Martin et al. 2003). The initial development of a self-report measure of individual use of humour, and the general nature of humour in the workplace, was undertaken in 2007. This Humour at Work scale (HAW) will be validated in 2008 against the Lie Scale from the EPQ-R (Eysenck, Eysenck & Barrett 1985), the M-37, a short Big-Five factor adjective checklist, normed in Australia (Rawlings 2001; Boldero, Rawlings & Haslam 2007), the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988), and the Humor Styles Questionnaire (Martin, Pulik-Doris, Larsen, Gray & Weir 2003) with the intention of predicting, through structural equation modelling, Global Job Satisfaction (Warr, Cook & Wall 1979), Climate of Fear (Ashkanasy & Nicholson 2003) and those scales that predict productivity (Patterson, Warr & West 2004) from the Organizational Climate Measure (Patterson, West, Shackelton, Dawson, Lawthom, Maitlis, Robinson & Wallace 2005).

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Stirring the Possum in Australian Art History

Art historian Joan Kerr (1938-2004) championed many little-known artists in her broad and democratic approach to Australian art history. As an architectural historian Kerr maintained an independent and often controversial view of what 'heritage' restoration should mean. She never hesitated to speak up – stir things up – if she thought a situation warranted it, both within the university and in the community at large. Art history is a serious discipline with well-defined requirements for scholarly engagement – a sense of humour not usually being one of them. Yet, whether 'opening' two Stanton Library filing cabinets (the 'Constructive Women: Architecture and Design Archive'), writing a scholarly article on the neglected 'art' of cake decorating or likening architectural historians to 'struggling marine life in the blocked estuary that...confines the architectural profession', Joan Kerr frequently stepped outside the boundaries of conventional history and into satire and parody to encourage all Australians to look with fresh eyes at their visual heritage.

POSTER PRESENTATION

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Using different styles of humour: Personal predilection or what the situation calls for?

Though Martin conceives his Humor Styles Questionnaire as a measure of consistent individual differences in the way people use humour, it was hoped to show the questionnaire could also be used to demonstrate variability in people across time. Two groups of around 40 students were placed in a pleasant or unpleasant mood using music and short video clips. At first glance the results suggested that mood made little difference to the reported uses of affiliative, self-enhancing and self-defeating humour, however inspection of measures of extraversion and neuroticism strongly suggested that students within each mood condition were not behaving in the same way. For example, it appeared that extraverts in a bad mood used less positive humour than they would have done in a good mood, while introverts tended to use more. Overall, there was evidence of a rather complex relationship between prevailing personal preferences for particular humour styles and variation within a person depending on situation and mood.