AUSTRALASIAN HUMOUR STUDIES NETWORK 2010 COLLOQUIUM
"Risk-Taking and Transgression in Humour"

WOMENS COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Saturday 13th and Sunday 14th February 2010

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TIMETABLE   SATURDAY 13 FEBRUARY

8.30 -- 9.00am   *Registration; Tea and Coffee (Garden Courtyard Arcade)*
          All-day Plenary Session: THE LIBRARY

9.00   "**Humour and the Workplace**" **Convenor: Dr Bruce Findlay, Psychology, Swinburne University of Technology**

9.00 – 9.30   **Ms George Major, Research Associate, Language in the Workplace Project, Victoria University of Wellington/Macquarie University**
          Being (in)appropriate with workplace humour: Transgressing socio-cultural norms

9.30 – 10.00   **Mrs Maren Rawlings, Psychology, Swinburne University of Technology**
          Demographic differences in humour measurements: If it's male, managed but not mature, is it work humour?

10.00 – 10.30   **Dr Bruce Findlay, Psychology, Swinburne University of Technology**
          Emotion-work, humour, and burnout

10.30 – 11.00   **Mr Daryl Peebles, Management, University of Tasmania**
          Humour - a possible component of "Psychological Capital"?

11.00 – 11.30 am   *Morning Refreshments*

11.30 – 12.00   **Assoc. Prof. Robert Phiddian, Humanities Research Centre, Prof. Ian Gibbins, Anatomy and Histology, Assoc. Prof. Haydon Manning, Politics, Flinders University**
          Recognition, disgust and the effects of political satire

12.00 – 12.30   **Dr Mark Rolfe, School of Social Sciences & International Studies**
          Politicians and satirists and their wicked, wicked linguistic ways

12.30 – 1.30 pm   *Lunch*

1.30 – 2.00   **Prof. Michael Ewans, University of Newcastle and Assoc. Prof. Robert Phiddian, Flinders University**
          Risk-taking and transgression: Aristophanes' "Lysistrata" today.

2.00 – 2.30   **Em.Prof. Conal Condren, History of European Discourses, University of Queensland**
          Satire and Definition

2.30 – 3.00 pm   *Afternoon Tea*

3.00   "**Humour and the Law**", **Convenor: Em. Prof. Conal Condren**
3.00 – 3.30   **Dr Laura E. Little, Law, Temple University/Visiting Fellow, University of Sydney**
          Regulating funny: How American courts regulate humor in contract, sexual harassment, trademark, and defamation cases

3.30 – 4.00   **Dr David Rolph, Law, University of Sydney**
          Does defamation law have a sense of humour?

4.00 – 4.30   **Dr Catherine Curtis, History, University of Sydney**
          Keeping your head: Early modern political satire and the perils of parrhesia

4.30 – 5.00   **Discussant/Convenor; General Discussion**

5.00 – 5.45pm   *Pre-dinner Refreshments – Announcement of Dinner Arrangements*

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TIMETABLE   SUNDAY 14 FEBRUARY

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8.30 – 9.00 am   *Registration; Tea and Coffee*

  Morning Parallel Session A: *THE LIBRARY*

9.00 – 9.30   **Ms Mira Crouch, Arts and Social Sciences, UNSW**
                    Embarrassingly funny, is it not?

9.30 – 10.00   **Dr Paul Jewell, Philosophy, Flinders University**
                    The ethics of parody

10.00 – 10.30   **Dr Hannah Burrows, Medieval Studies, University of Sydney**
                    A dead snake on a dead horse on an ice-floe: Form and function in Old Norse riddles

10.30 – 11.00   *Morning Refreshments*

11.0 0 – 11.30   **Dr David Rawlings, Psychologist**
                    Sydney and Melbourne: Which is more afraid of being laughed at?

11.30 – 12.00   **Mr Anton Crouch, Independent Scholar**
                    Black and blue: Violence as humour in vaudeville blues

12.00 – 12.30   **Dr Peter Spitzer, Medical Director, The Humour Foundation**
                    Risk-taking in aged care: Exploring the SMILE study

  Morning Parallel Session B: *FAIRFAX COMMON ROOM*

9.00 – 10.00   **Mr Forrest Wheeler, Exec. Director, "Clown Interactive Programs", Oregon, USA**
(Work-shop)   *Putting humor to work: Examining humor from a "skill" perspective*

10.00 – 10.30   **Dr Jessica Milner Davis, Letters, Art & Media, University of Sydney**
                    Transgressing the boundaries: Humour relating to children

10.30 – 11.00   *Morning Refreshments*

11.0 0 – 11.30   **Professor Carmen Moran, Humanities & Social Sciences, Charles Sturt University**
                    Psychological and physical transgression in cartoons

11.30 – 12.00   **Ms Elisha McIntyre, Studies in Religion, University of Sydney**
                    Risking religion's wrath: Satire, Sunstone Magazine and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

12.00 – 12.30   **Discussion**

12.30 – 1.30 pm   *Lunch*

  Afternoon Plenary Session: *THE LIBRARY*

1.30 – 2.00   **Mr Lindsay Foyle, Cartoonist/Cartoon Historian**
                    The 'Five Bells' Ripple Effect: How Australia Honors its Cartoonists

2.00 – 2.30   **Dr Colin Dray, English, University of Sydney**
                    Harwood's monsters: Mask, parody and the embodied subject

2.30 – 3.00   *Afternoon Tea*

  Closing Plenary Session: *THE LIBRARY*

3.00 – 4.00   **Dr Susan Turnbull and Dr Felicity Collins, Media & Cinema Studies, La Trobe University**
                    Transgressing national types: Magda Szubanski and Chris Lilley

4.00 – 4.30   **Dr Michael Lloyd, Social & Cultural Studies, Victoria University of Wellington**
                    Unnatural love, down under: 'Flight of the Conchords' tackle Australia

4.30 – 5.00   **Discussion and Closing Business: presentation by Daryl Peebles, University of Tasmania, on plans for the February 2011 Colloquium**

5.00 – 5.30   *Departure Drinks*

5.45 – 6.45   **Meeting of AHSN Review Panel (Fairfax Common Room)**

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ABSTRACTS

Dr Hannah Burrows, Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Sydney
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A dead snake on a dead horse on an ice-floe: Form and function in Old Norse riddles

In the medieval Icelandic saga *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, Gestumblindi, who has fallen out of favour with the powerful king Heiðrekr, is given a choice: submit to the judgement of the king's counsellors, or propound a riddle Heiðrekr cannot solve. Gestumblindi takes a risk: he chooses the riddling option. This allows for the presentation and preservation of 37 riddles – apart from a scant few other examples, the only Old Norse riddle-collection now extant. Among them are unusual poetic forms, tantalising mythological references, echoes of eddic texts, and creative depictions of everyday Scandinavian objects. Yet they have thus far been largely neglected in the scholarship. My paper will examine the form of the Old Norse riddles and the way they play with and transgress linguistic, semantic and genre boundaries, and what this can tell us both about medieval Scandinavian culture and about riddles as entertainment and learning.

Em. Prof. Conal Condren FSSA FAHA, Centre for the History of European Discourses, University of Queensland
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Satire and Definition

It is common to assume that definition is an essential process in dealing with complex intellectual phenomena, somehow standing beyond the definiendum (that needing to be defined); but definitions come in different forms, for different ends, and all carry with them attendant problems. This paper arises directly from an attempt with several others to produce a workable definition of satire for legal purposes and constitutes a set of further reflections illustrated principally with reference to defining Menippean satire.

Mr Anton Crouch, Independent Scholar, formerly Geology, University of New South Wales
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Black and blue: Violence as humour in vaudeville blues

ABSTRACT: After briefly considering the 1929 Fats Waller/Andy Razaf song *Black and blue*, the paper will continue with a discussion of the African-American "husband

and wife" duo vocal performances which contain violence presented in a humorous way. Performers to be heard will include Louis Armstrong & Lilian Hardin, and Joe & Susie Edwards (*Butterbeans & Susie*). This material, which is categorised as vaudeville blues, will be considered in the general context of violent farce and contrasted with the non-humorous violence of the classic solo blues (eg, in the recorded work of Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith). Further consideration will focus on Angela Davis' distinction between real and representational violence in the blues, and the relevance of violence in the blues to contemporary black feminism will be raised.

References

Davis, A. Y., 1998. *Blues legacies and black feminism*. New York: Pantheon Books.

West, C. M., (Ed), 2003. Violence in the lives of black women: battered, black, and blue. Binghamton: Haworth Press.

Ms Mira Crouch, Adjunct Research Associate, Arts and Social Sciences, UNSW
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Embarrassingly funny, is it not?

We know that we may laugh when embarrassed, be it in the form of a 'nervous giggle' or in an attempt to laugh off the embarrassing action. We also understand that embarrassment flows from transgressions, and that our laughter is meant to make light of the breach of social norms that makes us seem foolish or inept. More complicated is the case where we laugh at an embarrassing incident in which we are not involved. This, in turn, may be linked to our amusement at enacted comedy in which embarrassment plays a key part, as, eg, in Fawlty Towers. The obtuse Basil lurches from one perilous situation to the next, desperately trying to maintain his self-image while upsetting his customers and making a fool of himself before us, the audience. Blinded by his zeal to avoid embarrassment, he is perplexed and angry when his strategies fail. Here we are the ones who are embarrassed, and we laugh – though some of us cringe, too. Mirth and pain are closely interwoven, and this paper's question is: what is it that gives rise to this emotional complex? I shall use one episode of Fawlty Towers as an example on the basis of which to consider this question. The starting point of the discussion is an analysis of embarrassment *per se*; the second part of the paper addresses the issue of comic embarrassment. The paper will draw on both sociological and psychoanalytic theories regarding humour and social interaction.

Dr Catherine Curtis, Hon. Research Associate, Dept of History, University of Sydney
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Keeping your head: early modern political satire and the perils of parrhesia

Early modern satirists (1500-1700) insisted on the importance of freedom of speech, especially in the form of satire, in maintaining a healthy and prosperous polity. My paper considers the satire of Sir Thomas More (*Utopia*, 1516), Erasmus (*The Praise of Folly*, 1511), Juan Luis Vives (*On Europe Divided, and the Turkish War*, 1526) and Robert Burton (*The Anatomy of Melancholy*, first version 1621). How does a satirist,

especially one who occupies an official government or church position, exercise free speech in order to expose the corruption of war-mongering popes and princes, or the hypocrisy of charlatan philosophers and clergy, without transgressing secular and canon law? Ever mindful that 'the wrath of the king is death' and that the pope holds the weapon of excommunication, what strategies did these satirists use in the hope of giving effective counsel aimed at genuine reform while at the same time evading charges of defamation, sedition or irreligion? How did these satirists themselves conceive of the ethics of satire, and what reception did they receive?

Dr Colin Dray, Dept of English, University of Sydney
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Harwood's monsters: Mask, parody and the embodied subject

This paper will address one of the most famous literary hoaxes in Australian history – *The Bulletin* scandal – in which Gwen Harwood, under the guise of 'Walter Lehmann', slipped two offensive acrostic messages into the pages of a publication she had come to see as arrogant, chauvinistic, and self-aggrandising. Inspired by the writings of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, Harwood's hoax exposes numerous absurdities in the interpretation of literature, both in the physical manner in which poems are read, and in the definition of what constitutes a work of art. Similarly, in utilising a male, chauvinist persona, she reveals the artifice of authorial identity, refocusing her reader's attention solely upon the structure of language in the moment of its expression.

Prof Michael Ewans FAHA, University of Newcastle and A/Prof Robert Phiddian, Director, Humanities Research Centre, Flinders University
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Risk-taking and transgression: Aristophanes' Lysistrata today.

In 2005 Michael Ewans directed the first production of his accurate but actable translation of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, using mostly first year students in Newcastle, NSW. (The University of Oklahoma Press will publish the new translation in 2010.) In 2009 Robert Phiddian used this translation for the first time with students in his Comedy and Satire course at Flinders University, after using another translation on six occasions in earlier years.

Robert Phiddian will discuss the experience of changing in 2009, in dramatized readings produced under similar circumstances at Flinders, from the Penguin translation of Alan Sommerstein (1973, rev. 2002), which was used between 1998 and 2007, to the new Ewans translation. This accidental experiment leads to perceptions about the play, translation, and actor and audience reaction to comedy and obscenity. The differential function of these translations in 21st-century Australia has both critical and pedagogical implications.

Michael Ewans' part of this joint presentation will focus on the translation and staging at Newcastle of the most confrontational and transgressive scene in *Lysistrata,* that

where Lysistrata negotiates a peace settlement between the Athenian and Spartan ambassadors, which is forged when the ambassadors inscribe their terms for peace on the nude body of a young woman who personifies Reconciliation. He will discuss how his new translation brings out the true obscenity of this scene, how his staging brought out its meaning, and how it was received, in particular by the women in both the acting company and the audience.

Dr Bruce Findlay, Psychology, Swinburne University of Technology
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Emotion-work, humour, and burnout

This paper will describe a study by one of my Honours students, Jason Campbell, who collected self-report data from an international sample of Flight Attendants. The measures used include the Frankfurt Emotion Work Scale which asks about the frequency with which respondents have to display emotions in their work that they may not feel. Research in other workplaces (call centres, hospitality, handicapped children's home) has found emotion work to be stressful and to predict both job dissatisfaction and burnout. Jason's hypothesis was that perhaps one's sense of humour (measured by Martin et al.'s Humour Styles Questionnaire) or the general humour use in one's workplace (measured by Rawlings & Findlay's Humour at Work scale) would mediate the relationship between emotion work and both burnout and job satisfaction. Implications of the results for staff selection and training will be discussed.

Mr Lindsay Foyle, Cartoonist (since 1975), Australian cartoon historian
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The 'Five Bells' Ripple Effect: How Australia Honors its Cartoonists
When cartoonist Joe Lynch drowned in Sydney Harbour in 1928 he would not have suspected his death would be commemorated in a poem of major standing, a painting described by many as a masterpiece and a substantial mural in one of the most famous buildings in the world. Joe Lynch grew up next door to George Finey in Auckland and followed him to Sydney where both became cartoonists on Smith's Weekly. One night while going to a party at George's home in Mosman in 1927, Joe fell off the ferry and drowned. No laughing matter. In 1938, poet Kenneth Slessor, who had known Joe since 1924, wrote a poem about Joe's death, Five Bells, which became a national favourite. John Olsen, who was born the year after Joe drowned, started his art career as a cartoonist and was inspired to do both a painting based on the poem in 1963 and a mural in 1973 for the Sydney Opera House near, not far from where Joe drowned. The poem and the paintings are national treasures, but poor old Joe is forgotten. That's no joke.

Dr Paul Jewell, Dept of Philosophy, Flinders University
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The ethics of parody

Recent legislative changes in Australia and elsewhere have allowed copyright exemptions for parody. Ideally, legislation reflects society's values and ethics, or is at least compatible with them. The term 'copyright' uses the paradigm of 'rights', particularly property rights. In Philosophical Ethics though, there are other paradigms besides rights. How would a parodist fare in, say, Hume's conception of communitarian ethics? Or according to Bentham's utilitarianism? Or Kant's categorical imperative? Parody is the unauthorised use of intellectual property, with both similarity to and difference from other misappropriations such as piracy, plagiarism and forgery. A focus on musical parody avoids such distracting side issues as free speech or the content being parodied and allows an examination of the ethics of parody *qua* parody.

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Regulating funny: How American courts regulate humor in contract, sexual harassment, trademark, and defamation cases

When humor hurts people, they may press legal claims. Courts then match injuries with legal rules, and choose to insulate or condemn the humor. Regulatory patterns emerge, with courts systematically preferring some types of humor. This study explores how American courts regulate humor in contract, trademark, employment discrimination, and defamation cases. Across these diverse categories, courts are remarkably consistent in the types of humor that they regulate or protect from liability.

American courts regulate two types of humor with particular vigor: superiority and release humor. First identified by ancient thinkers (Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, and Cicero) and refined by Thomas Hobbes, superiority theory highlights the quality of humor that seeks amusement from making one person feel successful at the expense of others. By contrast, release humor taps into repressed sources of pleasure, pressure, or anxiety, focusing on taboo or difficult topics such as sex, excretion, or death. Theories of release humor are associated with Sigmund Freud, Alexander Bain, and Herbert Spencer.

American law's corrective justice goals and definitions of legal wrongs support imposing liability for superiority and release humor. What is surprising, however, is courts' tendency to privilege yet another type of humor: incongruity humor. Identified with Immanuel Kant and Arthur Schopenhauer, incongruity theory suggests that humor arises from the juxtaposition of two inconsistent or unrelated phenomena. Where humor has these incongruous qualities, American courts tend to avoid liability, thereby placing incongruity beyond the law's grip.

Documenting regulation patterns guides courts, attorneys, and humorists seeking to understand and predict humor regulation. The patterns show how the law implements social norms and selectively deploys constitutional doctrine protecting freedom of expression.

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Unnatural love, down under: Flight of the Conchords tackle Australia

This paper could be seen as a riff on a modified "blonde joke": An Australian on one side of a lake yells out to a New Zealander on the other, "How do I get to the other side?" The New Zealander replies, "You are on the other side!"

Replacing "New Zealander" with "blonde" and "an Australian" with "a man", would probably gain a quicker laughing response than this modification, however, it all depends on context. For example, in the context of a group of Australians telling a round of "sheep shagging" jokes about New Zealanders, the above joke could be slotted in a transition point and would be perfectly consistent with the tenor of the sheep shagging jokes. That is, it would be another example of *blaison populaire*, and would gain quick laughter as the kiwi is positioned as the butt of the humour (he/she is so dumb he/she does not understand the indexical basis of the question about the "other side"). However, if you are a New Zealander, perhaps the joke can be read with a subtle twist: the response is not out of "dumbness", but because the kiwi is happy for the Australian to remain where they are. This would make the joke a kind of "squelch", with the upshot that New Zealanders are no longer the butt of the humour. This is highly speculative, however, in this paper we ground speculation in particular aspects of the highly successful *Flight of the Conchords* television series. This shows that the traditional power imbalance of *blaison populaire* can be played with in subtly nuanced ways. Additionally, one of the interesting things about the "unnatural love" episode that this paper will focus on, is that there is a third party to the procedure, that is, the American audience who first viewed the series. This regroups the laugh dynamics so that at times the Austrayans and NuZilunduhs share far more in common than the discourse of sheep-shagging jokes would suggest.

Ms George Major (with Prof. Janet Holmes, Dr Meredith Marra and Dr Bernadette Vine), Research Associate, Language in the Workplace Project (Victoria University of Wellington); doctoral candidate, Macquarie University
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Being (in)appropriate with workplace humour: Transgressing socio-cultural norms

Humour in the workplace has been variously classified by different researchers as a distraction, a facilitative solidarity strategy, a source of creativity, and as a means of contesting and challenging the status quo. Data from the Wellington Language in the Workplace Project provides evidence in support of all these propositions. Humour can also be generated by transgressing norms, including communicative norms.

In this paper drawing on our extensive corpus of authentic interactions in a wide range of New Zealand workplaces, we focus on how humour may entail both intentional and unintentional transgressions of politeness norms, and demonstrate the importance of

context in interpreting the role of humour at work. We adopt a qualitative, ethnographic approach, making use of discourse analytic techniques to identify and describe areas in which there is evidence of contrasting politeness norms and evidence of attempts to reconcile competing group discourse norms and ways of speaking. We demonstrate that norm-breaking humour conveys very different messages in different socio-cultural workplace contexts.

Ms Elisha McIntyre, Doctoral student, Dept. of Studies in Religion, University of Sydney
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Risking religion's wrath: Satire, Sunstone Magazine and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Believers go to great lengths to ensure that God and all who represent him are protected from the barb of a good joke. Religious institutions draw a clear and encompassing line around the sacred to ensure it is hermetically sealed off from any potential irreverence. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is noted for its authoritarian and institutionalised nature, and within the church community laughter is subject to social codes designed to preserve the sanctity of the Church. For the most part this means no laughing at holy things. This paper examines the case of *Sunstone* magazine, a liberal, intellectual Mormon publication that frequently includes satirical cartoons that explicitly challenge church doctrine and include laughter at things the church holds sacred. The magazine is independent of the Church, yet its aim is to strengthen rather than attack the Church through open discussion. It will be argued that this independence in contrast to the rigidity of the institution, as well as a deep understanding of LDS issues, allows *Sunstone* cartoons to be critical and probing. The paper will consider the ways in which church doctrine is explored humourously and how this impacts upon *Sunstone*'s relationship with the official Church.

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Transgressing the boundaries: Humour relating to children

A decade ago, I identified a form of humour which I called "child-centric" i.e. one which takes for its joking the child's point of view. Examples range from the famous *Punch* columns and later books about an English public-schoolboy called Nigel Molesworth (written by Geoffrey Willans, former schoolmaster, in parody of the moralising children's novels by Victorian lady-novelist, Mrs Mary Molesworth) to the early 1980s Australian TV comedy team, The Comedy Company (particularly its characters of schoolgirl Kylie Mole -- another echo of Mrs M, via Sue-Townsend's 1980s novels of adolescence, *The Diary of Adrian Mole from Major to Minor*-- and the awful toddler Jophesine (sic), both played by Maryanne Fahey) and more recently the schoolgirl heroine of *Summer Heights High,* Ja'mie King (played in drag by her talented creator, Chris Lilley, ABC TV 2007). The humour of such pieces depends upon a bi-valent vision of the world, seen at one and the same time through the eyes of children and of adults. It succeeds by incorporating the view-point of the child and,

as comedy, has proved entirely non-controversial, then or now.

Recent reactions (2009) to current Australian examples of attempted child-based humour pose the question of whether a shift in community attitudes has now taken place. Examples which provoked offense and even suppression range from outrage at *The Chaser's* failed 2009 sketch satirising the fatuity of granting dying children their last wishes such as a trip to Disneyland (the *raison d'être* of The Starlight Foundation charity) and the case of the Victorian T-shirt manufacturer, Cotton On Pty Lid, which was obliged to recall a popular line of designer baby-T-shirts emblazoned with logo's such as "They shake me", "I'm living proof my mum is easy" and "The condom broke". Does the joking point-of-view of these pieces differ in significant ways from that of more successful child-centric humour? The (in)famous competition run in 2005 by the (Anglican) religion and humour web-site, Ship of Fools (shipoffools.com), to identify the most offensive anti-Christian joke (as well as the best) suggests by its results a possible underlying factor: heightened public awareness (in the UK and Australia at least) about adults abusing children. Have children become the new taboo-group in contemporary, transgressive humour?

References:
J. Milner Davis. "*Down With Skool!*: the Perspective of Youth in Contemporary Western Humour", in Paton, G.E.C., C. Powell and S. Wagg, eds, *The Social Faces of Humour*, Aldershot: Arena, 1996, pp.89-103
Mary Louisa Molesworth, *The Adventures of Herr Baby*, London: Macmillan, 1881; *A Christmas Child: A Sketch of Boy Life*, London: Macmillan, 1880 etc
Sue Townsend, *Adrian Mole from Major to Minor: The Mole Diaries, the First Ten Years,* London: BCA, 1991
Geoffrey Willans and Ronald Searle (illus.), *The Compleet Molesworth*, London: Pavillion Books, 1985.

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Psychological and physical transgression in cartoons.

There are many ways to look at transgression, for example from ethnological, sociological, psychoanalytic, artistic, and literary perspectives. There are also numerous classification systems for types of transgressions, such as sexual, moral, religious and social transgression. This paper takes a psychological perspective and looks at two forms of transgression using nomenclature taken from Horton's paper on children's perceptions of transgressions: Physical transgression and psychological transgression (Horton, 2003). In that paper, physical transgression was exemplified by pushing someone over and psychological transgression by calling someone names. This paper examines these two types of transgressions, physical and psychological, in single frame cartoons. Physical transgressions in cartoons are often clearly aggressive but funny. In some forms of humour, name-calling is linked with teasing and thus considered transgressive, whereas in cartoons name-calling is less clearly associated with teasing. This paper further proposes that name-calling in cartoons is not perceived as a serious psychological transgression because of its close alignment with

verbal skill (puns, wordplay, and playing with stereotypes), and that it is often seen as clever and funny rather than deeply and meaningfully transgressive. As a result, psychological transgression of this sort may be more subversive than physical transgression. Cartoons will be used to support this proposition or challenge it.

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Humour - a possible component of Psychological Capital?

Luthans, Youssef and Avolio (2007) believe that "today's business environment is in great need of more humour and laughter" (p.167). Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) recognised that characteristics such as optimism and courage appeared to lessen negative effects of trauma in some individuals. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi called for a more 'positive' psychology to emerge with an emphasis on human strengths and positive institutions. Their call was to understand better what is 'right' with people rather than dwelling on perceived weaknesses. Luthans (2002) studied positive approaches within organisations' behaviours that involved building on the strengths that individuals brought to a workplace rather than trying to manage that person's weaknesses.

Nelson and Cooper (2007) noted that Luthans 'pioneered the positive approach in organizational behaviour by mapping out positive organisational behaviour (POB)'. Using positive psychology and POB as a basis, Luthans, Youssef and Avolio (2007) proposed psychological capital (or PsyCap) which they defined as an individual's positive state of development and is characterised by:
  - confidence (self-efficacy)
  - optimism
  - hope and
  - resilience
Although it is only these four attributes that currently 'fit' within the PsyCap model, the authors also consider an individual's cognitive and affective strengths such as creativity, wisdom, well-being, flow and humour. But is humour simply a contributory factor to the four attributes listed above? The authors propose that humour may be a good candidate for future inclusion in PsyCap in its own right and, although this has been theorized, to the best of my knowledge it has not been tested. This paper explores that possibility.

References:
Luthans, F. (2002) 'The need for and meaning of positive organisational behavior', Journal of Organisational Behavior, 23, 695-706.
Luthans F., Youssef C. and Avolio B., Psychological Capital – Developing the human competitive edge, (2007) Oxford University Press, New York p167 and pp207-238.
Nelson, D. and Cooper, C. (2007) Positive Organizational Behaviour, Sage Publications, London. p.3
Seligman, M and Csikszentmihalyi, M (2000) 'Positive Psychology', American Psychologist, 55, 5-44

Assoc. Prof. Robert Phiddian, Director, Flinders Humanities Research Centre, Prof. Ian Gibbins, Anatomy and Histology, Flinders University, and Assoc. Prof. Haydon Manning, Politics, Flinders University (presenter: Robert Phiddian)
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Recognition, disgust and the effects of political satire

As an interdisciplinary team including a literary scholar, a political scientist, and a neuroscientist, we will investigate what it means to 'get' political satire. Developments in cognitive and social sciences make it possible to be far more empirical than in the past, where literary studies has tended to own satire. Within literary and cultural studies, there is a new field rapidly developing called cognitive poetics, which offers a way around the 'death of the author' impasse in accounts of satire. Our hypothesis is that satire involves both cerebral and visceral elements of cognition. It requires recognition of polemical purpose in a piece, in which negative emotions including disquiet, anger and disgust, are engaged. The project will proceed by symposia and experiments into the cognition of political cartoons, and result in two books and several articles. This paper gives a prospectus for the project.

Dr David Rawlings, Psychologist
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Sydney and Melbourne: Which is more afraid of being laughed at?

Ruch and Proyer, two researchers from Zurich, have developed a questionnaire to measure individual differences in gelotophobia (fear of being laughed at) and, in a large-scale cross cultural study, found that participants from South and East Asia tended to obtain higher scores than Westerners. Included among these Westerners were 267 Australian students from the universities of NSW and Melbourne. Papers at previous AHSN meetings (by Jessica Milner Davis and the present author) reported analyses of the Australian data, with particular reference to separate 'Chinese/East Asian' and 'Australian' ethnic sub-groups within the sample, providing general support to the Ruch/Proyer research. In addition to briefly reviewing this research, the present paper compares gelotophobia scores obtained by the Melbourne and NSW samples. Given the longstanding nature of Sydney-Melbourne rivalry, and the fact that the null-hypothesis was rejected, it is argued that the paper fits clearly within the meeting's 'risk taking' theme.

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Demographic differences in humour measurements: If it's male, managed but not mature, is it work humour?

The prevailing notion of an individual having a distinct humour style, closely related to personality and enduring over a range of contexts (e.g. Thorson and Powell,1993) is challenged in this comparative analysis of demographic factors in the *Humor Styles*

Questionnaire (HSQ - Martin et al., 2003) and scales from the longer form of the *Humour at Work* (HAW) scale. A sample of Australian workers responded to both the HSQ and the HAW and their details of gender, position and age were recorded. Controlling for age, contrasts to Martin's findings were found. These may reflect different uses of humour in the workplace. Scales of the long HAW were analyzed, controlling for age. Gender was a main effect for "Gossip" and "Stirring". A main effect of position was marginally significant for "Sharing". The most intriguing finding involved an interaction between position and gender for the scale "Stirring" of the HAW.

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Politicians and satirists and their wicked, wicked linguistic ways

The charge of hypocrisy is the stock-in-trade of political satirists who are ready to patrol the boundaries of ethical political behaviour and pounce on transgressions. They are just as ready to pronounce on the abuses and corruptions of language, particularly by politicians and in particular the practice of euphemism. Hence, they appeal to a satiric heritage by citing Orwell and some of his views on political language. However, in the process, they not only simplify Orwell's work but also the nature of representative democracy and associated issues of language. In so doing, they participate in and perpetuate the very hypocrisies that are essential to the running of representative democracy. Nevertheless, there is much value in the satirists helping to keep politicians on their toes, constantly trying to gauge the boundaries of acceptable behaviour, and to live up to the 'civilizing hypocrisies' of our political system.

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Does defamation law have a sense of humour?

Although Australians have a well-developed sense of humour, one would not necessarily appreciate this from an examination of Australian defamation law, which can not infrequently seem humourless. This is paradoxical, given that the central construct of defamation law, and the standard by which liability is determined, is the 'ordinary, reasonable reader', which, in principle, is intended to be closer to a layperson than to a lawyer. This paper explores the interaction of a robust sense of humour with equally robust defamation laws in Australia.

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Risk-taking in aged care: Exploring the SMILE study

SMILE is the Sydney Multisite Intervention of LaughterBosses and ElderFields – a clustered randomised trial. This 2009-2011 study is funded by the National Health & Research Medical Council. It is a landmark, collaborative study involving the Dementia Collaborative Research Centre of University of NSW and the Humour Foundation. It is led by Professor Henry Brodaty AM (UNSW).

LaughterBosses (Dementia RACF healthcare staff members) partner with an ElderField (professional performer from the ranks of the Humour Foundation) in a new model to bring humour to residents with dementia. Impact on quality-of-life, depression and behaviours will be studied along with impact on staff. A preliminary pilot study has been conducted at a HammondCare facility in Sydney. This was an uncontrolled study of humor therapy for persons with dementia in two residential dementia-care units, one in low (hostel) care and one in high (nursing home) between February and June 2008. Results of this pilot will be presented.

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Workshop: Transgressing national types: Magda Szubanski and Chris Lilley

With the recently revived *Hey Hey It's Saturday* on Wednesdays currently (October 2009) in disgrace for including a "Red Faces" sketch involving a band of mixed race surgeons in a black and white face parody of The Jackson Five, the transgressive role of comedy would appear to be in question in Australia, particularly in relation to ideas about nation and race. In this workshop, we will discuss the careers of Magda Szubanski and Chris Lilley in order to explore the issue and limits of transgression in their work, with particular reference to the ways in which they subvert notions of the national type and the subversive role of comedy more generally within the Australian cultural context.

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Work-shop: Putting humor to work: Examining humor from a "skill" perspective

This workshop presents a defendable definition of humour for critical discussion. It will involve attendees in activities that separate laughter from humour, providing opportunities to see humour as a skill in addition to entertainment. Through the identification of comedy as "text" and humour as the "target" for comedy, we can understand the important role of relevance in successful humour. "Irrational Humour" will be presented as a fresh approach enabling us to simplify the classification of humour into three distinct categories. Interactive participation is the only viable way to reach this objective. This presentation assumes the audience already accepts the value of humour and has had exposure to various (although conflicting) theories.