Australasian Humour Studies Network
AHSN Annual Conference

The Politics of Humour and The Humour of Politics

2-4 February 2022
The Podium, 42 Melville Street
University of Tasmania, Hobart

AHSN

UNIVERSITY *of* TASMANIA

Welcome and Acknowledgements

What an interesting time to be organising a conference – especially one that normally attracts delegates from every Australian state and territory, as well as from New Zealand and elsewhere overseas. When we first agreed that it would be wonderful to come back to UTAS for the 28th annual conference, Tasmania had ridden the Covid waves relatively unscathed. How things have changes in recent weeks.

Despite all, the conference organisers have developed an engaging program addressing the theme of *The Politics of Humour and the Humour of Politics* and also an enjoyable accompanying social program.

Tasmania has often been the butt of the larrikin Aussie joke but conversely it has produced some splendid cartoonists, comedians and humourists. Tasmania learned very early in its European history that it is better to laugh at yourself than to waste all that potential material. Or, as Barry Humphries once put it, "Never be afraid to laugh at yourself, after all, you could be missing out on the joke of the century."

Similarly, Tasmania has produced some politicians who have provided much of Australia's richest fodder for satirical interpretation. So, we couldn't think of a better place to hold this conference and are thrilled to welcome all delegates.

To catch up with old friends and colleagues after a long period of not being able to do so, and to welcome new friends who share similar interests while exploring the many facets of our conference theme, bodes well for a fulfilling and fun-filled conference. Whether you are online or here in Hobart, enjoy!

AHSN 2022 Organising Committee
Conference Convenor: Dr Daryl Peebles (also host of 17th AHSN Conference, 2011), *University of Tasmania*
Committee: Assoc Prof. Kerry Mullan, Chair AHSN Board, *RMIT University*
Dr Jessica Milner Davis, AHSN Co-ordinator, *University of Sydney*
Dr Benjamin Nickl, *University of Sydney*
Dr Mark Rolfe, *University of NSW*
Dr Reza Arab, *Griffith University*

Today we are meeting on lutruwita (Tasmania) Aboriginal land, sea and waterways. We acknowledge, with deep respect the traditional owners of this land, the muwinina people, which we meet today. The muwinina people belong to the oldest continuing culture in the world. They cared and protected Country for thousands of years. They knew this land, they lived on the land and they died on these lands. I honour them.

For the muwinina people, the area around nipaluna (Hobart) was their Country and they called Mount Wellington kunanyi. We acknowledge that it is a privilege to stand on Country and walk in the footsteps of those before us. Beneath the mountain, among the gums and waterways that continue to run through the veins of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

We pay our respects to elders past and present and to the many Aboriginal people that did not make elder status and to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community that continue to care for Country. We recognise a history of truth which acknowledges the impacts of invasion and colonisation upon Aboriginal people resulting in the forcible removal from their lands.

Time	Activity
WEDNESDAY 2 FEBRUARY 2022	
Venue: The Podium, University of Tasmania, 42 Melville Street, Hobart	
11:00-12:30	*Upper Ground 21* **(Open Session)** **Early career researcher/postgraduate panel:** *Making Community, Finding Futures* (livestreamed) Terri Senft, *Macquarie University*, Ben Nickl, *University of Sydney*, Chris Müller, *Macquarie University,* & Ian Reilly, *Mount Saint Vincent University*
12:30-13:30	**Registration** *Upper Ground 22 Common Room*
13:30-14:00	*Upper Ground 21* **Official opening** (livestreamed) Introductions – Kerry Mullan, Chair AHSN Board Welcome – Professor Lisa Fletcher, Head of the School of Humanities, *University of Tasmania* Housekeeping – Daryl Peebles, Conference Convenor, *University of Tasmania*
14:00-15:00	*Upper Ground 21* **Keynote Address** 1 (livestreamed) Chair: Daryl Peebles, *University of Tasmania* Cartooning and politics Jon Kudelka*, Artist and Cartoonist*
15:00-15:30	**Afternoon tea** *Upper Ground 22 Common Room*
15:30-17:00	**Concurrent sessions**

Upper Ground 21 **HUMOUR & POLITICS A** Chair: Michael Meany	*Upper Ground 23* **POLITICS OF COMEDY** Chair: Mark Rolfe

1. Does psychological distance influence the effects of satirical news? Evidence comparing NZ and UK audiences Stephen Skalicky, *Victoria University of Wellington*, Britta Brugman, Ellen Droog & Christian Burgers, *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam* (online) 2. The Disclosure of "Kremlin agents": Humorous Uptakes of the Topic in Ukrainian Public Discourse Ludmilla A'Beckett, *University of the Free State* 3. Melbourne: The Week That Was Kerry Mullan, *RMIT University*	1. Aristophanes and Politics in *Lysistrata* Michael Ewans, *University of Newcastle* 2. The Anatomy of the Gag: Havel, Stoppard and Comedies of Political Censorship Fergus Edwards, *University of Tasmania* 3. Should we Laugh? Australia and China at 50: Political Humour on the Stage Anne Pender, *University of Adelaide*

17:00-18:00	**Break and travel to Government House**
18:00-19:00	**Welcome reception at Government House, 7 Lower Domain Rd, Queens Domain (see map below) – bookings only**
	Her Excellency the Honourable Barbara Baker AC & Emeritus Professor Don Chalmers AO
	NB: See final page for pre-recorded presentations available for viewing at any time

THURSDAY 3 FEBRUARY 2022	
Venue: The Podium, University of Tasmania, 42 Melville Street, Hobart	
Time	**Activity**
	Upper Ground 21
9:00-10:00	**Keynote Address** 2 (online and livestreamed) Chair: Jessica Milner Davis, *University of Sydney* Satire and the Dream of Cultural Politics Dr Nicholas Holm, *Massey University*
10.00-11.00	**Concurrent Sessions**

Upper Ground 21	Upper Ground 23

HUMOUR & POLITICS B
Chair: Benjamin Nickl
 	
1. Send in the Clowns: Donald Trump and the Politics of Ridicule
   Rebecca Persic, *Curtin University* (online)
 	
2. "Just a great place for the whole family": Humour in Google Reviews
   for Correctional Centres
   Reza Arab, *Griffith University*
	HUMOUR IN AUSTRALIA A
	Chair: Til Knowles
	
	1. Americanization and the Idea of National Humour: Examples from Australia and Britain
	Mark Rolfe, *University of New South Wales*
	
	2. The TV Larrikin: Britain, America and the Australian Television *Funnyman*
	Lindsay Barrett, independent scholar & Peter Kirkpatrick, *University of Sydney*

11:00-11.30 **Morning tea** *Upper Ground 22 Common Room*	
11:30-12:30 **Concurrent Sessions**	

Upper Ground 21	Upper Ground 23
HUMOUR IN EDUCATION Chair: Kerry Mullan 1. **"Is this Thing on?"** Teacher Views of Incorporating Humor into Online Language Classes Peter Neff, independent scholar & John Rucynski, *Okayama University* (online) 2. For Fun's Sake: Gamification and Play in Undergraduate Education Michael Meany & Geoff Hookham, *University of Newcastle*	**HUMOUR IN AUSTRALIA B** Chair: Bruce Findlay 1. "You can't laugh at that!": The Politics of Laughter: Does Mainstream Australian Overidentification Political Satire Challenge the Social Status-quo? Jacci Brady, *University of Melbourne* 2. "Whatever happened to the larrikin?" Mocking the Political Correctness Debate in Contemporary Australian Comedy Til Knowles, *University of Melbourne*

12:30-13:30 **Lunch** *Upper Ground 22 Common Room*	
13:30-14:30 *Upper Ground 21*	

Keynote Address 3 (livestreamed)
Chair: Peter Kirkpatrick, *University of Sydney*
From 'Accession' to *Black Mischief*: The Politics of Race in Evelyn Waugh's Satire
Dr Naomi Milthorpe, *University of Tasmania*

14:30-15:30	Concurrent Sessions

Upper Ground 21	*Upper Ground 23*
POLITICS OF HUMOUR A Chair: Meredith Marra 1. The Politics of Humour in Hybrid Work Barbara Plester, *University of Auckland* (online) 2. Humorous Swearing: Evidence from Australian Gamers Carolin Krafzik, *La Trobe University*	**TV/FILM & VISUAL HUMOUR A** Chair: Angus McLachlan 1. Visual Art, Ageing and Humour Deborah Eddy, *Griffith University* 2. The Role of Humour in Russian and Serbian Independent Art Oxana Vasilyeva, *Griffith University*

15.30-16.00	Afternoon tea *Upper Ground 22 Common Room*

16.00-17.30	Concurrent Sessions

Upper Ground 21	*Upper Ground 23*
POLITICS OF HUMOUR B Chair: Mark Rolfe 1. Negotiating Belonging: Humour in Narrative Emily Greenbank, *Victoria University of Wellington* (online) 2. The Politics of Circus & The Circus of Politics Mark St Leon, *Independent Scholar* 3. Decolonising Comedy Studies Sarah Ilott, *Manchester Metropolitan University* (online)	**TV/FILM & VISUAL HUMOUR B** Chair: Carmen Moran 1. *Bulworth*: Ghost of the Past, or Spirit of the Times? Rodney Taveira, *University of Sydney* 2. The Role of Laughter in the *Antiques Roadshow* Angus McLachlan, *Federation University Australia* 3. The Politics of Stereotype, Caricature and Humour Jessica Milner Davis, *University of Sydney*

	NB: See final page for pre-recorded presentations available for viewing at any time
17.30-19.30	**Free time**
19.30-late	**Optional Conference Dinner**: *Da Angelo Ristorante* (Italian), 47 Hampden Rd, Battery Point, Hobart (see map below)

FRIDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2022
Venue: The Podium, University of Tasmania, 42 Melville Street, Hobart

Time	Activity
9.00-10.00	*Upper Ground 21* **Keynote Address 4** (online and livestreamed) Chair: Michael Ewans, *University of Newcastle* Giving Shape 'to Airy Nothing, a Local Habitation' and the Name of Humour: Academic Myth and the Political Origins of a Concept Prof. Conal Condren, *University of New South Wales*
10.00-11.00	**Concurrent Sessions**

Upper Ground 21	Upper Ground 23
COMMUNICATING HUMOUR Chair: Reza Arab 1. Real is Not Real Enough: Translating and Adapting Humour from Page to Sound Ben Nickl, *University of Sydney*, & Chris Müller, *Macquarie University* 2. The Other-Participation in Humour Sequences: An Analysis of Self-initiation, Other-recruitment and Other-sanctioning Andrea Rodriguez &Valeria Sinkeviciute, *University of Queensland* (online)	**HUMOUR & THE HUMOURS** Chair: Jessica Milner Davis 1. The "Archaeology" of 18th-century Humour: From "Humours" to "Humour" Robert Phiddian, *Flinders University,* & Shane Herron, *Independent Scholar* 2. The Personal, Local, National and Transnational Politics of Good Humour and Good *Qi* Flow Rey Tiquia, *University of Melbourne*

11.00-11.30	**Morning Tea** *Upper Ground 22 Common Room*
11.30-12.15	**Plenary Session** *Upper Ground 21* **Public Event (open to non-delegates)** (online and livestreamed) Chair: Robert Phiddian, Flinders University Co-writing Political Satire in Australia Ross Fitzgerald, Griffith University, & Ian McFadyen, Screenwriter and Humourist
12.30-13.30	**Lunch** *Upper Ground 22 Common Room*
13.30-15.30	*Upper Ground 21* **Awards and Closing Ceremony** (livestreamed) Chair: Kerry Mullan 1. Comedy performance from Ben Richardson, award-winning Tasmanian comedian/cartoonist 2. The Famous Wombat Poo IgNobel Award for Physics 2019 Intestines of non-uniform stiffness mould the corners of wombat feces Scott Carver & Ashley Edwards, *University of Tasmania* 3. Presentation of 2022 Fellows in the Order of the Jess-ters Jessica Milner Davis, AHSN Convenor 4. Presentation of certificates to AHSN 2022 Scholarship Winners Kerry Mullan, Chair AHSN Board 5. Closing remarks Conference Organising Committee
15.30-16.00	**Afternoon tea** *Upper Ground 22 Common Room*
16:00-17:30	*Upper Ground 21* **AHSN Board / Annual Review Panel meeting [members and conference organising committee only]**

17:30 **Optional** **evening** **activities**	**Farewell drinks at In the Hanging Gardens Pub, 112 Murray Street, Hobart (5 mins from conference – see map below)** **Street Eats @ Franko.** A hyperactive inner-city night food-and-drink market with a rotating cast of eclectic musical acts to keep you fed, watered, and grooving. In Franklin Square – diagonally opposite the GPO. If it hasn't been produced in Tasmania, you won't find it at Franko. The great range of street food vendors will feed you, the curated selection of craft beer, cider, wines and local spirits will cover libations, and the music will get you dancing. 4.30-9.00pm. **Hobart Twilight Market, Long Beach, Lower Sandy Bay.** Eats, drinks, design, music! Tasmania is renowned for its quality produce, and that's what you'll find at this market; a diverse range of food and locally-crafted small batch drinks alongside a myriad of design stalls. Add in live music from local talent and the scene is set for a wonderful Friday night! Engage with passionate stallholders, who'll share their story with you. The market is dog and family friendly.
	Pre-recorded presentations available for viewing at any time (link) 1. An Investigation of Chinese Adult English Learners' Comprehension of Sarcastic Tweets in English (link) Xuan Li, *Queen's University Belfast* 2. 'Chinese Scientists Created Coronavirus; Iranians Spread It around the World': A Sociological Analysis of Political Relations between China and Iran in Persian Jokes (link) Fatemeh Nasr Esfahani, *Independent Scholar* 3. The Failure of Humour (or the Humour of Failure) in *The Dead Don't Die* (link) Oliver Rendle, *Manchester Metropolitan University*

Abstracts

Pre-conference Workshop Early Career Researcher/Postgraduate Panel (Open to all delegates)

Making Community, Finding Futures

Terri Senft, *Macquarie University*
Ben Nickl, *University of Sydney*
Chris Müller, *Macquarie University*
Ian Reilly, *Mount Saint Vincent University*

It can be hard for researchers of humour to find like-minded scholars. Early career and postgraduates, in particular, may have found themselves in this situation while working away on their dissertations, theses, or job and research grant applications. COVID certainly has made it no easier a task to network, mingle, and form professional relationships and dialogues across disciplines and institutions, connecting to others locally or interstate, or even internationally. And while the annual gathering at the AHSN offers a space for the exchange of ideas and an opportunity to build contacts, we would like to offer an ECR/POSTGRAD platform dedicated specifically to this process. This panel will serve two goals: one is to encounter and discuss the research and questions that everyone is working on. Guided by more senior scholars who work with humour in some form or another, the other aim is to establish dialogue between these perspectives on humour and reflect on future applications and research opportunities.

The Q&A to follow the presentation and reflection round invites all conference delegates to participate and support the panellists by modelling a supportive environment of scholarship with peer feedback.

Format: In-person panel, presentations and reactions (30 mins), all-audience Q&A (30 mins)

Christopher John Müller is a Senior Lecturer in Cultural Studies & Media at Macquarie University. His work focuses on the intersection of technological processes and the deceptive "immediacy" of feeling and technologically mediated sense of self. Chris is the author of *Prometheanism: Technology, Digital Culture and Human Obsolescence* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), and his articles, translations and reviews have appeared in *Parallax, Thesis Eleven, CounterText, TrippleC, Textual Praxis* and *Modernism/modernity*. Chris also co-edits the *Genealogy of the Posthuman*, an open access, ISSN accredited online platform on www.criticalposthumanism.net.

Benjamin Nickl is a Lecturer in Comparative Culture and Literature and Translation Studies at The University of Sydney, with an interest in cultural technologies such as humour and an unhealthy

obsession for pop culture. Ben has written a book about ethnic comedy (*Turkish German Comedy*, 2020, Leuven UP) and published his work in *Media, Culture, and Society*, Oxford UP, and *New Europe*. He also is co-editor of the *Global Germany* series.

Ian Reilly is an Associate Professor in Communication Studies at Mount Saint Vincent University. His research explores the intersections of politics, humour, civic engagement, and media activism. He is the author of *Media Hoaxing: The Yes Men and Utopian Politics* (2018), published by Lexington Books.

Terri Senft is a founding member of the Association of Internet Researchers, and the founder of the international Selfie Researcher Network. Her books include *Camgirls: Celebrity and Community in the Age of Social Networks* (Peter Lang, 2008) and the co-edited *Routledge Handbook of Social Media* (Taylor & Francis, 2015). Her most frequently cited works elaborate on her coinage of the term "microcelebrity," and reflect on the ramifications of selfie culture worldwide.

Public Event (Open to non-delegates)

Co-writing Political Satire in Australia

Ross Fitzgerald AM, *Griffith University*
Ian McFadyen, screenwriter and humourist

The two presenters have co-authored three Grafton Everest adventures featuring the Panama-hat wearing anti-hero Dr Professor Grafton Everest. Most recently they have written the seventh political satire in the Grafton Everest series *The Dizzying Heights*, and the eighth in the series: *The Lowest Depths* was released on November 5 2021 by Melbourne-based publisher, Hybrid. The co-authors will reflect on their experiences of writing Australian political satire and on the reception of the Grafton Everest fictions by critics, politicians, and the wider general public.

Comparisons will also be made about the difference between Australian reactions and those from overseas. For example, two of Ross Fitzgerald's Grafton Everest novels, *Pushed from The Wings* and *All About Anthrax*, which were republished in England in Corgi Bantam's prestigious Black Swan series, were particularly well received in South Africa and Great Britain. This is because they were reminiscent of Tom Sharpe's over the top political satires set in South Africa under Afrikaner rule and also the fact that Booker prize winning author Howard Jacobson wrote a stunning review of both books in the *London Observer*. Jacobson's review was entitled "Conquering Everest". But despite Barry Humphries' very favourable review in *Quadrant Magazine*, in which he wrote "Grafton Everest is a wonderful creation whom I would place without question in the ranks of Philip Roth's Portnoy and Kingsley Amis' Lucky Jim", in Australia they haven't yet met with the same success. The presenters will discuss the challenges confronting contemporary authors writing and publishing political satire for Australian audiences.

Ross Fitzgerald AM is Emeritus Professor of History and Politics at Griffith University. A columnist and reviewer at *The Australian* newspaper, Professor Fitzgerald's most recent books are a memoir *Fifty Years Sober: An Alcoholic's Journe*y and the political/sexual satires *Going Out Backwards: A Grafton Everest Adventure, The Dizzying Heights*, and *The Lowest Depths*, all published by Hybrid in Melbourne. He lives in Redfern, Sydney.

Ian McFadyen is a writer, actor, and television producer of *Comedy Company* fame. He has collaborated with Professor Fitzgerald to write three Grafton Everest novels: *Going Out Backwards, The Dizzying Heights*, and *The Lowest Depths*. He lives in Queensland. Ross Fitzgerald and Ian McFadyen's *Going Out Backwards* was shortlisted for Australia's only award for humour writing, the bi-annual Russell Prize.

Keynotes

KEYNOTE ADDRESS 1: Cartooning and Politics
Jon Kudelka, cartoonist

Jon Kudelka has a science degree but he decided to "do science a favour and became a cartoonist" instead. As a student, Jon had an obvious flair for art, especially life drawing, and was encouraged by his Grade 10 art teacher to develop this skill. Life drawing remains one of Jon's favourite hobbies. He is now an award-winning cartoonist (including two Walkley Awards and the National Museum of Australia's Cartoonist of the Year Award) and his work appears in *The Saturday Paper* and the *Hobart Mercury*. Jon works in his studio / gallery The Kudelka Shop in Salamanca Place, Hobart – about a two-minute walk from the conference venue.

Jon will present on his art and its relationship with politics.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS 2: Satire and the Dream of Cultural Politics
Nicholas Holm, *Massey University*

In the first decades of the twenty-first century, humour has been widely embraced as a legitimate means by which to cover, analyse and intervene in political issues. These political applications of humour have predominantly been understood in terms of "satire": a concept that evokes an idea of humour as a politically meaningful cultural act. Such an account of humour - as a way of doing politics through culture - connects satire with the long-standing theoretical tradition of 'cultural politics' that explores the ability and mechanism of cultural forms to inform, inspire or enact political change.

However, while satire may sometimes appear as the realisation of the cultural political agenda, in this presentation, I will suggest that there are good reasons for scepticism regarding satire as the ultimate manifestation of humour's politics. This is not simply due to concerns regarding the efficacy of satire as a form of politics, but rather a consequence of how the concept of satire imagines the relationship between politics and entertainment. Drawing on the aesthetic theory of Georg Lukács, I will argue that satire is the reification, rather than the realisation, of cultural politics, and that a fixation on satire blinds us to the more varied and more influential ways in which humour can and does do politics.

Dr Nicholas Holm is a Senior Lecturer in Media Studies at Massey University, New Zealand. His research addresses the politics of popular culture with particular emphasis on humour and satire. He is the author of *Humour as Politics* (2017), and several articles on the politics of humour in contemporary media. He is a member of the editorial board of Comedy Studies.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS 3: From 'Accession' to Black Mischief: The Politics of Race in Evelyn Waugh's Satire

Naomi Milthorpe, University of Tasmania

In Henri Bergson's famous formulation, comedy requires a "momentary anaesthesia of the heart."[1] This momentary anaesthesia implies the return of feeling to the place that was numbed, a return that may in all likelihood include a hurt. This paper attempts to think through the aesthetics and politics of satire, by looking closely at Evelyn Waugh's 1932 satire of empire, *Black Mischief*. What does it mean to laugh at racist jokes, and does it mean differently now than it did 90 years ago? How does satire work to deform ethical positions through joke-making; what kind of political work is that doing; and who was and is hurt by these deformations?

Black Mischief sees the London bounder Basil Seal travelling to a fictional African island, Azania, to witness the crowning of its youthful, Oxford-educated Emperor Seth. Seth is eager to modernize his nation and seeking a bastion of "Progress and the New Age", finds Basil, the louche, irresponsible embodiment of Western modernity. Basil becomes a de facto governor of Azania, with all governmental decisions referred to his newly created Ministry of Modernization. The novel is scornful of the modern West, with its ideals of internationalism, democracy and plurality underscored by technocratic innovation: in emulating the imperial west, Seth's utopian project of modernisation is (according to Waugh) doomed to fail. Waugh identified the novel's primary theme as 'the conflict of civilisation, with all its attendant and deplorable ills, and barbarism.'[2] Though none of the European characters or institutions is set up as a positive model, Waugh's

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[1] Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell (Macmillan, 1914), p. 5.

[2] Evelyn Waugh, 'An Open Letter to His Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster', May 1933, *The Letters of Evelyn Waugh*, edited by Mark Amory (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), p. 75.

novel is nevertheless a destructive work debunks African self-determination. And, though caustic about colonial modernity and mocking of European behaviours and morality, the novel is also racist in its caricature of African characters.

Before it was *Black Mischief*, Waugh called his novel "Accession". Its original name, which still appears on the manuscript title page, bespeaks its origins in Waugh's trip to Abyssinia in 1930 as foreign correspondent, covering the coronation of Haile Selassie. Its published title makes explicit the racist core of its satire. As editor of this novel for a scholarly edition, I am interested in the way that satire textually constructs race; how the racist joke is made, from manuscript to published text; and in thinking about the role of textual scholarship in recording the shifting and evolving racist dynamics inherent in the text and its reception. This paper will attempt to explore some of these complex problems.

Dr Naomi Milthorpe is Senior Lecturer and Head of Discipline for English, at the School of Humanities. Her research focuses on modernist, interwar and mid-century British literary culture. She is the author of *Evelyn Waugh's Satire: Texts and Contexts* (Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2016) and the editor of *The Poetics and Politics of Gardening in Hard Times* (Rowman, 2019). She is currently preparing a scholarly edition of Waugh's 1932 novel *Black Mischief* for publication as volume 3 in The *Complete Works of Evelyn Waugh* (Oxford University Press).

KEYNOTE ADDRESS 4: Giving Shape 'to Airy Nothing, a Local Habitation' and the Name of Humour: Academic Myth and the Political Origins of a Concept

Conal Condren FASSA FAHA, *University of New South Wales*

Humour is commonly regarded as universal. One expression of this ambiguous affirmation is the belief that humour theory originates in antiquity. The lineage from Plato to Kant is familiar. My argument however, is that this is a genealogical myth, a creature of academic politics advertising and legitimating a new field of university study and its concerns. Such promotional pedigrees are common in academia. In this case, there is a specific mechanism: the treatment of laughter as an expression of humour, so allowing reflections on laughter to be construed as theories of humour.

If we do not project a universal awareness of humour from its localised ubiquity, then we can ask afresh when and why was a concept of it first developed. The general shape of the narrative will be familiar but needs placing in the context of laughter being taken as an expression of aggression, despite its recognised physiological benefits.

Freed from popular humoral theory, the word humour first became an occasional synonym for jest in the mid-seventeenth century; then by the early eighteenth, it is sometimes used as a covering term for a variable range of more specific phenomena, such as jesting, facetiousness, occasionally satire, and often wit. This process was the creation of a rough semantic field that, with augmented content, is now in use. A *sense of humour* only comes in the nineteenth century, a consequence of an

extension of the meaning of sense to mean faculty, so becoming of interest in the emerging discipline of psychology. It is also only from the nineteenth century that humour becomes a loan word in many other languages, sometimes with altered meaning.

Politics may also help explain why the invention of humour, as we now understand it, was a contingent English language phenomenon. Seventeenth-century England was notoriously violent and insecure. The assumed aggression of laughter was seen as part of the problem. Humour, came to sanction certain sorts of laughter as safe, just as there were places in which it might be contained as acceptable. Satire traditionally justifying aggressive laughter, gradually became less confrontational as it was aligned with, then partially subsumed by humour in the twentieth century.

I suggest, then, a duality of political explanation at odds with the mythology of humour studies: academic politics helps account for a spurious tradition of humour theory, while the conceptualization of humour became an answer to political insecurity exacerbated by the aggression thought inherent in laughter. If this argument is along the right lines, the implications for the routine affirmation that humour is a universal should be obvious.

Conal Condren is an Emeritus Scientia Professor at UNSW, and has held visiting positions and fellowships at the University of Queensland and in the USA, Europe, New Zealand and Cambridge UK. He is a foundation member of the AHSN Review Panel. Predominantly he is an intellectual historian of early-modern Britain, with interests in the philosophy of historical writing. In these contexts, he has published on satire and on studying humour historically and he is currently finishing a new book on the latter topic. He is also writing a volume on Shakespeare and the ethics of office. With Aoise Stratford, he has co-written a prize-winning and widely performed black comedy, "Will and the Ghost".

Presentations

Ludmilla A'Beckett, *University of the Free State*
The Disclosure of "Kremlin Agents": Humorous Uptakes of the Topic in Ukrainian Public Discourse

Description After the beginning of Russian aggression in Ukraine, the meddling by Moscow in the country's life, was one of the most popular topics for discussion. Ukrainian public discourse was saturated with reflections on the interference of "Kremlin agents". For the analysis of these public discussions, 400 contexts of the hand of Moscow/ Kremlin and Moscow/Kremlin agents were collected from Ukrainian official and social media between 2014 and 2020. The analysis of invoked topics, revealed that Ukrainian politicians and their supporters often used these labels to discredit political rivals. Subsequently, these claims were often reversed and, in most of instances, invalidated. The incessant practice of attributing all social problems to Moscow's meddling resulted in mistrust of state institutions and state officials. Participants in discussions about the Moscow agents coined many humorous statements applying echoic irony (Wilson and Sperber

2007). Comedians used these expressions in spoofs of the political accusations. One of the artistic companies which parodied the claim was directed by a comic actor who became the President of Ukraine in 2019. The paper concludes with an analysis of the irony mechanism that was used in mocking the use of the labels "the hand of Kremlin" or "Moscow agents" in Ukrainian politics.

Reza Arab, *Griffith University*
"Just a great place for the whole family": Humour in Google Reviews for Correctional Centres

It is common these days for dissatisfied customers and clients to head to Google (or other similar platforms) and write a negative review (Ward & Ostrom 2006; Gensler et al. 2013; Shin & Larson 2020). When it comes to humour in online reviews, it has been reported, for example, by McGraw et al. (2015) that humour appears to be used as a mechanism for a complainant to deliver critique light-heartedly. In addition, funny, clever or witty online reviews are shown to be often admired by readers (Vásquez 2019) and to create a more positive effect (Yus 2018; Vásquez 2014).
It is an aspect of life in the early 21st century that everything with a physical address can have Google reviews. This even includes prisons and correctional facilities. Unlike many other places whose Google reviews consist of encouraging words by happy customers or harsh criticism by disappointed ones, prison reviews are generally jocular remarks intended to be funny, mostly set within an ironic frame. This type of untruthful, humorous online reviews has been studied recently. For instance, Skalicky et al. (2015) and Blank (2015) identified a trend of writing satirical (product) reviews on online platforms such as Amazon.

Humour, naturally, exists in prisons and among prisoners. Some suggest that certain forms of humour reveal an institutionalised aspect of prison life that fosters conflict avoidance and smooth daily interactions (Nielsen 2011), and fends off the psychological and rhetorical power of the cognitive behavioural programmes, even if only briefly, in the form of 'soft resistance' (Laursen 2017). Terry (1997) even argues that humour is a principal means of negotiating and managing the gap between a normal and a convict identity.

For this paper, I have focused on Google reviews for prisons. Most of these reviews usually contain humour that refers to the life inside that particular prison. Even if the reviewer has not been in prison, but their (jocular) review describes the life inside. I have compiled a corpus of all Google reviews for correctional centres in Queensland (14 centres) and New South Wales (38 centres). The total number of reviews are 638 reviews of which two-thirds consist of written reviews as well as star ratings. Serious reviews are extremely limited and they often seem to have been written by an observer and not a former inmate or staff member.

This study conducts a textual analysis of the reviews and compares them with other satirical and humorous online reviews. Then it examines the frequency of themes and shared linguistic elements among prison reviews. Finally, it will discuss how the institution of prison and its social

stigma (Goffman 1963; Combessie 2002; Cunha 2014) determines the stylistics and linguistics of these mostly ironic reviews.

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Combessie, P. 2002. Marking the Carceral Boundary: Penal Stigma in the Long Shadow of the Prison. *Ethnography*, 3 (4): 535-55.

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Lindsay Barrett, *independent scholar,* **& Peter Kirkpatrick,** *University of Sydney*
The TV Larrikin: Britain, America and the Australian Television Funnyman

Stephen Fry has suggested a distinction between what he sees as the characteristic American and English comic figures, in which the Yank is a freewheeling "wisecracker" and the Brit an aspirational lower middle-class failure: Jerry Seinfeld versus Basil Fawlty. Given that both styles of humour have influenced Australian television comedy, Fry's thought bubble has prompted us to think about humour and class in relation to a comparable Australian figure, the larrikin. As manifested on Australian television, that classic local comic type might be said to possess a smart-alec wit similar to the American wise guy, but he remains steadfastly working-class – or does he? This paper will

chart the shifts within Australian television comedy during the 1970s and 80s, with particular focus on the evolution – or perhaps devolution – of the larrikin.

The post-war era saw a realignment of Australia's political, economic and cultural affiliations away from Britain towards the United States. In the history of Australian television comedy we see this reflected in the rise of Paul Hogan, aka "Hoges", a wisecracking individualist who could be marketed to Americans, and who would parlay this success into Crocodile Dundee (1986) and a minor Hollywood career. In many ways, though, Graham Kennedy was there before him, not least in adapting a US genre, the "tonight show", for distinctly local consumption. In his long, subversive career as a TV variety host Kennedy developed a schtick that complicates any simple conflation of larrikinism with the lower class.

As Susan Lever has noted, the Australian television sitcom has "struggled" as a local genre compared to character-based sketch humour coming out of vaudeville: the form in which Hogan and Kennedy excelled. Our analysis of this phenomenon in the 1970s and 80s will be triangulated with the career of Gary McDonald, who straddled both sketch format and sitcom during this time. McDonald made his name as Norman Gunston, a desperately aspirational failure with his own mock-variety show (1975-76), whose faux naïve manner, especially in celebrity interviews, might be styled 'larrikin' in impact. Yet McDonald is also justly celebrated for his performance as Arthur Beare, a comic loser like Fry's English type, in the long-running sitcom Mother and Son (1984-94).

Susan Lever. 2009. "Lookatmoiye! Lookatmoiye!": Australian Situation Comedy and Beyond. In *Serious Frolic: Essays on Australian Humour*, eds. Fran De Groen and Peter Kirkpatrick. St Lucia: UQP.
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Jacci Brady, *University of Melbourne*
You Can't Laugh at That! The Politics of Laughter: Does Mainstream Australian Overidentification Political Satire Challenge the Social Status Quo?

Modern Australian political satire is evolving and there is a growing use of authentic irony or overidentification irony. Overidentification satire provokes both laughter and thought by mocking political reality so closely, there is equal discomfort and escape, rather than only the mocking of others. My research aims to centre the voices of satirists with a constructivist grounded theoretical methodology through an action research (AR) strategy. My positionality is complex as an anthropologist who does comedy and community arts, who is doing research in the comedy industry. The collaborative emphasis on joint systemic reflection in action research is a welcome shift. AR harnesses my positionality rather than impose a strict expert/participant binary and better allows the recentring of the satirist experience.

Deborah Eddy, *Griffith University*
Visual art, Ageing and Humour

Feminism, humour and art are inescapably political. This is particularly so if one considers the feminist maxim 'the personal is political'. Feminist artists have been using humour since the 1970s to speak of injustices against women, the success of their art can be measured by the longevity of their artworks and the relevance they still have today. Humour is still a useful device for feminists who have often been labelled "earnest, authoritative and humourless" supposedly making feminists difficult for some to align themselves to.[1] As an older feminist visual artist rebeccabrunjak@hotmail.com who uses performance as a strategy, I foster the use of humour to counteract the sentiments that feminists are humourless. I proudly call myself a feminist at a time when feminist discourse rarely speaks of ageing women. My aim is to shoehorn older women into feminist thought and research to address the lack of meaningful studies about ageing women.

Humour and art are one way of doing this. Ageism presents itself in many guises, for example, older people are accused of having no sense of humour when in fact what they may find funny is quite different to younger people. This does not make older people dour and lacking in a sense of humour, rather they use it to deflect ageism. According to Ronald Berk, older people are prone to using "self-deprecating humor about the ageing process."[2]

In the video performance works I make I harness self-deprecating humour. I am the protagonist in the performances. I wear absurd costumes that I make using safety equipment and building supplies and it is the hi-vis nature of these materials that is an important factor as it provides a visibility to the issues of ageing that I am portraying. I often perform exaggerated ageing. For example, one of the videos I have made shows me acting as a much older woman. My costuming makes me appear to be too old to dance and yet I disco dance to the Bee Gees' song Staying Alive. This work is a self-deprecating laugh at ageing and comments on what others assume we can and cannot do. Another of my performance videos addresses the beauty industry's attempts to coerce older women into spending inordinate amounts of money on anti-ageing cosmetics. I portray myself as desperate and fatalistic but in a way others find humorous. One section of the video shows me attempting to iron out my wrinkles. This action elicits horrified laughs in audiences, but women know the extremes some go to remain young.

These two examples of my work have been successful in engaging audiences and starting conversations on what it is to be an ageing woman in a youth centric society. The strategy of performance art and the use of humour are powerful devices in educating and changing audience perceptions.

[1] Catriona Moore. 2014. Review: Backflip: Feminism and Humour in Contemporary Art, Contemporary Art and Feminism, published courtesy of *Eyeline,* no. 80 at: https://contemporaryartandfeminism.com/2013/09/08/review-feminism-and-humour-in-contemporary-art/.

[2] Ronald A. Berk. 2014. The Greatest Veneration: Humor as a Coping Strategy for the Challenges of Ageing. *Social Work in Mental Health*, 13 (1): 34 (December 14) at: https://doi.org/10.1080/15332985.2014.890152.

Fergus Edwards, *University of Tasmania*
The Anatomy of the Gag: Havel, Stoppard and Comedies of Political Censorship

When British playwright Tom Stoppard was asked what made a joke funny, Stoppard's first recourse was to his good friend, fellow playwright Vaclav Havel. Havel maintained, said Stoppard, that 'it all came down to incongruous juxtaposition. [The jokes] were only funny because two ordinary things were put together and one thing became amusing.'

When the Czechoslovak refugee, Tomáš Sträussler, was asked to provide a theory of humour, he referred to an academic essay entitled *The Anatomy of the Gag* (1966), written by exiled Czechoslovak political dissident Václav Havel. Stoppard's discussion elided both the detail of Havel's exposition, which dealt in terms of the defamiliarization of the automatism of reality, as well as the political uses to which both he and Havel had put the theory.
The attempts of totalitarian states to control what language can be used is crucial to both Havel's *The Memorandum* (1965) and Stoppard's *Cahoot's Macbeth* (1979). Comparing the two, especially given their common debt to Czechoslovak politics of the 1960s and 1970s, is instructive in itself. But analysing them within Havel's conceptual framework shows far more: it makes clear how it is the use of humour in the plays that forces the audience to engage directly with otherwise nebulous systemic issues of political control and coercion. This denies the audience the comfort of a culpability that collapses around a single character, and explains why critics have struggled to pinpoint the reasons for the ominous tone of both comedies.

The presentation will also contain a uniquely Australian aside discussing Havel's use of both 'wombat', and 'possum' as punchlines in *The Memorandum*, and the lamentable absence of similar references in *Cahoot's Macbeth*.

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Michael Ewans FAHA, *University of Newcastle*
Aristophanes and Politics in *Lysistrata*

Ancient Greek comedy always contained political references, and some whole plays by Aristophanes, including *Acharnians, Knights and Lysistrata*, place contemporary politics at the

centre. In *Lysistrata* the brilliant comic invention of a sex strike by all the women of Greece in quest of peace is used to critique war-mongers and conspirators.

This paper first briefly introduces the conditions of performance for comedy in Athens; next it outlines the political situation in early 411 BCE, when Aristophanes staged *Lysistrata*. Then our focus is on the two most political scenes in the comedy, the contest of words between Lysistrata and a male Bureaucrat and the Finale. Next we turn to the events in the few months after the performance, during which right-wing extremists staged a coup against the democracy; and to the defeat of Athens by Sparta in 404, when Aristophanes' ideal of a panhellenic alliance against Persia was crushed for good. Finally, I examine the impact which the play has had in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as it became a point of reference for women protesting against contemporary wars in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Emily Greenbank, *Victoria University of Wellington*
Negotiating Belonging: Humour in Narrative

For former refugees, negotiating the 'journey' from the peripheries of a new society towards belonging is beset with challenges. Unlike voluntary migrants, refugees rarely have the luxury of advance planning, and may arrive with little knowledge of local norms/practices. A critical sociolinguistic approach allows for close examination of the challenges that forced migrants encounter navigating new social worlds, and the function that humour and laughter can play.

The role of humour and laughter in navigating belonging is well established (e.g. Glenn, 2003; Holmes, 2000; Marra, forthcoming, 2020). Negotiating belonging is a two-way process: both newcomers and oldtimers have roles to play. Nowhere is this clearer than in everyday interaction, where mismatched interactional norms can lead to miscommunication and confusion. Explored in this paper, humour and laughter can be used in storytelling to manage identity claims vis-à-vis potentially identity-threatening content in narratives. It can also be used to signal in-group membership, or to maintain another's outgroup status. In this study I consider how humour and laughter are used to manage identity – by both former refugees and their interlocutors – in the ongoing pursuit of 'belonging'.

In the case of Kelly, a Palestinian woman, laughter is used in the telling of an unambiguously funny story, to the discursive end of trivialising narrated moments of extreme low agency which clash with the employable identity she attempts in the storytelling context. Laughter allows Kelly-as-narrator to position herself as an empowered, highly agentive woman, and to distance herself from what she frames as stereotypical ideas about the Middle East (as associated with the oppression of women). The laughter punctuating such a story hints at a salient structural obstacle for former refugees: the navigation of social Discourses (Gee, 2015) associated with refugeehood that are strongly connected to the social distribution of power, which may undermine attempts to enact competent, capable identities. Data is also presented of workplace recordings of Nina, a Colombian former refugee working in an aged care facility. In Nina's workplace interactions with

one resident, unsuccessful attempts humour by both parties can be seen to play a role both in Nina's attempts to orient to a New Zealander identity, and in her interlocutor's ultimately unhelpful continued positioning of her as a novice and newcomer.

While there is plenty of valuable advice and support available for former refugees on how to best 'fit in' to their new homes, the movement of newcomers from society's periphery towards its centre is not a one-player game (Angouri et al., 2017). This paper gives Interactional Sociolinguistic evidence for how humour is used in the joint endeavour of successful resettlement.

Angouri, J., Marra, M., & Holmes, J. 2017. Introduction: Negotiating Boundaries at Work. In *Negotiating Boundaries at Work: Talking and Transitions* (pp. 1–8). Edinburgh University Press.

Gee, J. P. 2015. Discourse, Small d, Big D. In *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*. 1–5.

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Holmes, J. 2000. Politeness, Power and Provocation: How Humour Functions in the Workplace. *Discourse Studies*, 2 (2): 159-185.

Marra, M. (forthcoming). Laughing along? Negotiating belonging as a workplace newcomer. *The European Journal of Humour Research*, 10 (2).

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Sarah Ilot, *Manchester Metropolitan University*
Decolonising Comedy Studies

The drive to 'decolonise' University curricula is one of the most urgent issues facing Universities in Britain and its former colonies today, an imperative compounded in Britain by the recognition that the attainment gap for BAME students is exacerbated by an institutional failure to provide inclusive curricular design and content. Despite the media attention that the 'Rhodes Must Fall' and 'Decolonise the Curriculum' global programmes have received, as well as the recent publication of the 'Black, Asian and minority ethnic student attainment at UK universities: #ClosingtheGap' report (UUK/NUS, 2019), the ambitions of these movements have not adequately filtered into research agendas, meaning that academic research is often lagging behind the pedagogical ideals represented.

In recognition of this, I aim in this paper to expose and challenge the norms of the existing canon of comedy theory and the centrality of western European comic performance as the primary means for interpreting comedy. In an act of ethical and pedagogical resistance, I assemble a new toolkit for the study of comedy that resists the white male canon of comedy theory that understands 'the human' in uniform yet inherently exclusive ways (extending from Plato and Aristotle through Thomas Hobbes, Sigmund Freud, Henri Bergson and Mikhail Bakhtin).[1]

I conceptualise comedy as a site in which colonial power is wielded and resistance enacted, and which therefore requires a theoretical toolkit sensitive to the historical and intellectual contexts of colonialism. As such, I centralise critics more attuned to the inequalities in power and opportunity created through the combined forces of colonialism, capitalism and humour. This includes critics such as Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha, Paul Beatty and Sarita Malik, who have written explicitly on the mechanisms of humour, alongside anticolonial thinkers from Frantz Fanon through bell hooks into the present day (Sara Ahmed, Ranjana Khanna), whose work I reframe so as to lend new insight to comedy studies through a centralisation of questions of embodiment, indignity and resistance.

By reframing the theoretical field to centre on systemic questions of inequality and violence born of colonialism and its aftermaths, this paper aims to shift the debate in comedy studies from individualising questions of offence to structural questions of hurt. This, in turn, restates the importance of the often underestimated or critically and pedagogically maligned field of comedy studies as a means of understanding social relations.

[1] See, for example, John Morreall, *Taking Laughter Seriously* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1983); James E. Evans, *Comedy: An Annotated Bibliography of Theory and Criticism* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1987); T. G. A. Nelson, *Comedy: An Introduction to Comedy in Literature, Drama and Cinema* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenberg, *A Cultural History of Humour: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997); Simon Critchley, *On Humour* (London: Routledge, 2002); Eric Weitz, *The Cambridge Introduction to Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Magda Romanska and Alan Ackerman, *Reader in Comedy: An Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

Til Knowles, *University of Melbourne*
"Whatever Happened to the Larrikin?" Mocking the Political Correctness Debate in Contemporary Australian Comedy

The cultural spectre of the larrikin haunts the contemporary Australian comedy industry. Emblematic of our supposed national sense of humour, the larrikin (and its rumoured demise) is often central to Australian debates about the impact of "political correctness". A term that holds different meanings for people from different parts of the political spectrum, "political correctness" is in part a call to intervene in how language is used in public discourse. This includes what kind of jokes are made, how, and by whom, something that is easy to construe as a threat to the egalitarian insults of the larrikin.

But the larrikin is not dead, nor is its survival antithetical to the changing discursive norms that inform "political correctness". This presentation shows how conversational comedy podcasts provide a platform for the contemporary evolution of the larrikin tradition. This evolution involves self-awareness, as modern performances of the larrikin mock and critique the tradition they are

continuing. I will offer a close reading of the rhetoric and performance of comedians in The Little Dum Dum Club (2010 – present), furthering a line of comedy scholarship that examines how comedy can offer more nuanced commentary than represented by any side of the "political correctness debate". This presentation takes "Episode 473: Wil Anderson & Tom Ballard" as a case study, considering the explicit, implicit, serios and joking interactions of the question asked by Anderson: "whatever happened to the larrikin?" This question is delivered in a manner that mocks and parodies the question itself and the surrounding debate while also answering it. These kinds of comedic conversations demonstrate how comedy can intervene in and offer complicated considerations of discursive norms while still prioritising non-seriousness.

Carolin Krafzik, *La Trobe University*
Humorous Swearing: Evidence from Australian Gamers

Swearing is commonly perceived as a characteristic feature of Australian English (Collins 2012: 77, Allan & Burridge 2009: 361, Leitner 2004: 125, Seal 1999: 1). Selected aspects of it have been studied, e.g. the use of specific words in the Australian context and how they reflect cultural values (Allan & Burridge 2009; Stollznow 2004; Wierzbicka 2002; Hill 1992). Allan & Burridge (2009) found that Australians tend to engage in social swearing to express in-group solidarity. This can take the form of humorous swearing, which is one of the more frequent forms of swearing observed among native speakers of English (Beers-Fägersten 2012; Allan & Burridge 2009; Stapleton 2003; Bayard & Krishnayya 2001; Andersson & Trudgill 1990).

The purpose of this paper is to investigate verbal humorous swearing among Australian speakers in the specific environment of multiplayer video games. Current research often focuses on humour in game design, written communication among gamers or interactional patterns between gamers in general (Marone 2015; Nijholt 2012; Dorman et al. 2006; Ducheneaut 2004). This paper presents findings from an analysis of swearing among three groups of Australian gamers that regularly meet up, virtually or personally, to play the multiplayer games "Overwatch", "Super Smash Bros." and "Minecraft". The dataset consists of 10 recordings of these gaming sessions, each about an hour long. All the teams have both female and male members; their age ranges from 18 to 30.
This data is part of a larger PhD project on the influence of ethnicity on swearing in Australian English. Three major ethnic groups present in Australia are under investigation: Anglo-Celtic, Chinese and Italian Australians. The gamers mostly come from these three backgrounds, a few of them are mixed or have other ancestry. The larger dataset consists of 30 self-recordings of groups, ca. 200 online-surveys and 24 interviews. The survey and interview data indicates swearing as generally perceived positively and judged inoffensive. A strong majority indicated to swear every day, predominantly in a non-aggressive way for auto-catharsis, humorous purposes, or social bonding, around close friends. This is also reflected in the gaming data.

A preliminary analysis of the gaming sessions shows that players use humorous swearing to encourage other players or evaluate their own failures/successes or specific situations in the game. Humour can also be observed frequently in indirect verbal abuse of players from opposite teams;

the opposite teams cannot hear the other team's conversations. As Andersson & Trudgill (1990) note, humorous swearing can take an abusive form but is not necessarily intended that way. In the gaming context, this kind of swearing can also be considered stylistic swearing (cf. Allan & Burridge 2009), a means to display an emotional attitude in a way that makes the interaction more interesting. Another purpose of humorous indirect abuse of the opposite team is to demonstrate solidarity with your own team; a strategy found both in swearing and joke-telling (cf. Allan & Burridge 2009; Norrick 2010).

Michael Meany, *University of Newcastle,* **& Geoff Hookham,** *University of Newcastle*
For Fun's Sake: Gamification and Play in Undergraduate Education

This paper examines, using a case study, the use comedic elements of play in the gamification of online lecture content. The case study examines a series of lectures demonstrating game elements and lecture themes by playfully incorporating and subverting polls, pop culture references, branching narratives, random and targeted trivia, and hidden item games. Through the intention inclusion of comedic elements, the traditional lecture process can be subverted which invites students to critically engage with the facetious and serious elements.

There is considerable literature on the topics humour and education (Bakar & Kumar, 2019; Kapp, 2012), gamification of education (Aizpurua, Price, & Tucker, 2018; Kapp, 2012; Manzano-León et al., 2021; Swacha, 2021), and play as an element of education (Eberle, 2014; Lean, 2019; Woods & Bond, 2018). In all three cases the ambition is to improve educational outcomes such as engagement with course material, retention of information and the development of lifelong learning skills.

A review of the definitions of humour, gamification and play reveal some incongruous relationships. These include combining the "voluntary" and "unproductive" (Eberle, 2014) elements of play with the "rule sets" and "mechanics" (Kapp, 2012) of gamification. Likewise, the definitions of humour from the literature do not encompass the intentional construction of comedy within the experience (Meany, Clark, & Laineste, 2014).

The gamification of learning processes in the fixed and codified universe of undergraduate teaching is an attempt to gamify an activity that has inherently many game attributes. If we are asking students to play this game, how can we build the elements of play into their activity? Where is the fun? Comedic subversion invites students to play with the staff, each other and the course content.

Aizpurua, M. D., Price, E., & Tucker, K. 2018. Give Gaming a Go! Enhancing learning through gamification. *Australian Law Librarian*, 26 (2).
Bakar, F., & Kumar, V. 2019. The use of humour in teaching and learning in higher education classrooms: Lecturers' perspectives. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 40, 15-25.

Eberle, S. G. 2014. The elements of play: Toward a philosophy and a definition of play. *American Journal of Play*, 6 (2): 214-233

Kapp, K. M. 2012. *The gamification of learning and instruction: game-based methods and strategies for training and education*. San Fransisco: John Wiley & Sons.

Lean, J. J. 2019. *Total Play! Exploring Participation and Play in Higher Education* (PhD thesis). Manchester Metropolitan University.

Manzano-León, A., Camacho-Lazarraga, P., Guerrero, M. A., Guerrero-Puerta, L., Aguilar-Parra, J. M., Trigueros, R., & Alias, A. 2021. Between Level Up and Game Over: A Systematic Literature Review of Gamification in Education. *Sustainability*, 13.

Meany, M. M., Clark, T., & Laineste, L. 2014. Comedy, Creativity, and Culture: A Metamodern Perspective. *The International Journal of Literary Humanities*, 11 (4): 1-15.

Swacha, J. 2021. State of Research on Gamification in Education: A Bibliometric Survey. *Education Sciences*, 11 (69).

Woods, F., & Bond, C. 2018. A systematic literature review of teachers' beliefs on play in contemporary education. *Journal of Playwork Practice*, 4 (2).

Jessica Milner Davis, *University of Sydney*
The Politics of Stereotype, Caricature and Humour

The connection between comedy and simplified or stereotypical characters already existed in Classical Greek theatre. Henri Bergson theorised it in *Le Rire* (1910), pointing out that comic characterisation is shaped by mechanical rigidity just as much as plots and verbal exchanges are. This artificiality signals a distancing of the characters from the audience and a lessening of their humanity so that the audience's involvement with them becomes strategic rather than empathetic. While sympathetic stereotypes do exist (e.g. Dickens' Oliver Twist and David Copperfield), humorous narratives and scripts expect audiences to be detached enough to enjoy watching a comic struggle, either between characters, or between them and circumstances, or both. Type-characterisation is connected to caricature and the more condensed the humour form (e.g. cartoons, canned jokes, sketch-comedy), the more essential these tools are (see Berger 1995: 54). This paper will briefly examine the concepts of caricature and stereotype, asking when and why the latter in particular acquired its present pejorative connotations of being unfair and demeaning, in fact forbidden to a mature audience. It will also examine the many reasons why such treatments are innately part and parcel of humour and comedy and some of the implications for humorists and contemporary taste in humour.

Berger, Arthur Asa. 1995. *Blind men and elephants: Perspectives on humor*. New Brunswick NJ: Transaction Publishing.

Bergson, Henri. 2005 [1910]. *Laughter: An essay on the meaning of the comic*. Trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell. Mineola NY: Dover.

Kerry Mullan, *RMIT University*
Melbourne: The Week that Was

It is well known that humour is a common way for people to process and deal with tragic events. Political controversies, natural disasters, and other crises often lead to the rapid proliferation of creative and amusing memes as a digital response mechanism, creating a sense of community and levity (Aslan 2020). This presentation will discuss a number of examples of humour circulated via Australian social media in the week of the Melbourne earthquake in 2021. No sooner had houses stopped shaking than the humour began - and it came fast and furious for the next 48 hours, not all of it connected to the earthquake. Other topics in the firing line that week were the antivaxx protests in Melbourne and the AUKUS submarine deal.

In this presentation I will analyse a selection of tweets, memes and media articles (received from my own contacts), focusing on three linguistic elements of humour: intertextuality, wordplay, and incongruity. It will be shown how the humour in these examples was not just performing as a coping mechanism for the earthquake, but also as a creative way of engaging with current political issues.

Aslan, E. 2020. When the internet gets 'coronified': Pandemic creativity and humor in internet memes. *Viral Discourse*. https://viraldiscourse.com/2020/04/28/when-the-internet-gets-coronified-pandemic-creativity-and-humor-in-internet-memes/

Angus McLachlan, *Federation University Australia*
The Role of Laughter in the *Antiques Roadshow*

The Antiques Roadshow series may not appear to be an obvious focus for the study of humour yet it offers numerous examples of laughter. While acknowledging the vexed relationship between laughter and humour, this paper will consider evidence gleaned from the series that suggests that traditional accounts of humorous laughter may not be adequate.

The sequences of interaction of greatest interest occur during the culmination of the conversation between the member of the public exhibiting the antique and the expert, when the latter, after discussing the antique's purpose, provenance, connection with the exhibitor and aesthetic appeal, provides an estimate of the antique's market value. Examination of the responses of exhibitors who learn of an especially high evaluation reveals that they often laugh. The traditional account of this laughter would be "… the expression of mere joy or happiness" (Darwin, 1872/1979: 198), which can readily explain reactions to jokes and other humorous remarks. In these exchanges, however, the estimates of high value, though sharing some features of jokes, belong to a family of utterances that would not be conventionally termed humorous, nor do the responses of the exhibitors conform precisely to the expected reaction to humour. Rather, a detailed examination of the interaction involving exhibitor and expert provides evidence which favours an account of laughter as constituting an integral feature of discourse. The expert's mode of delivering the

evaluation, the timing of the laughter and its placement within the exhibitor's utterance, and the presence of both an immediate audience of bystanders as well as the program audience, all support this notion.

The paper will develop this notion by treating laughter as an indexical that qualifies the talk with which it is closely associated and, critically, by virtue of this characterisation, indexes the stance of the laughing exhibitor that this is an informal occasion. The implication of this informal occasion is that what is said is of limited consequence to either party. Employing a dramaturgical perspective (Harré & Secord 1972), the expert and exhibitor are enacting a brief comedy during which the exhibitor is able to 'downplay' the importance of the material value of the antique, while at the same time acknowledging that this property of the antique is an appropriate, but previously unspoken, reason for her attendance at the event. In conclusion, it will be argued more broadly that an understanding of the role of laughter as part of language, particularly its indexical properties, not only allows us to explain the large variety of speech acts and verbal content associated with laughter and the importance of context, it also provides the basis for understanding conventionally defined humour, and its limits.

Darwin, C. 1979 [1872]. *The expression of emotions in man and animals*. London UK: Julian Friedmann Publishers.
Harré, R., & Secord, P. F. 1972. *The explanation of social behaviour*. Oxford UK: Basil Blackwell.

Peter Neff, independent scholar, & John Rucynski, *Okayama University*
"Is This Thing On?": Teacher Views of Incorporating Humor into Online Language Classes

Humor can be a vital component of the language teacher's repertoire, especially considering its positive impact on classroom atmosphere and student participation (Reddington & Waring, 2015; Wagner & Urios-Aparisi, 2011). As with many other aspects of teaching, however, instructors have had to rethink their approach to incorporating humor into their classes with the sudden shift to online instruction. Could humor survive this major transition and still have the same positive benefits? Would students still appreciate or even recognize instructor humor use with lessons being taught via online video conferencing?

In order to gain a better understanding of the role of humor in synchronous online teaching, the presenters undertook a mixed methods study, administering a survey to English language teachers in Japan (N = 60) and conducting extensive follow-up interviews with select participants. The Likert-scale items in the survey covered variables such as the benefits, challenges, and approaches to using humor in online teaching. Additionally, open-ended survey items queried learners about topics such as comparing the use of humor in online and F2F (face to face) lessons and solutions to the limitations of online teaching. Responses indicate vast differences in opinion, with some participants lamenting the insurmountable challenges of incorporating humor into their lessons

while others enthused over the unexpected possibilities offered by the novelty of this new teaching environment.

After reviewing the quantitative survey results, the presenters will then share expanded insights from the short-answer responses and follow-up oral interviews. Finally, implications for synchronous online pedagogy will be considered.

Ben Nickl, *University of Sydney*, **& Chris Müller,** *Macquarie University*
Real is Not Real Enough: Translating and Adapting Humour from Page to Sound

Have a listen, have a laugh, have a chat. This panel presents the result of an extensive research project on the sonic adaption and translatability of humour. The interdisciplinary research team (Chris Müller from Macquarie University, Benjamin Nickl from The University of Sydney, Helen Wolfenden from Macquarie University) is happy to present excerpts from the sound production that was the aim of phase 1 at the AHSN 2022: a 50-minute podcast movie based on the remarkable Californian diary. Written by Günther Anders during his years in Hollywood exile—after escaping the Nazis and making it to Hollywood, where he would find himself at factory lines and cleaning costumes in the HOLLYWOOD COSTUME PALACE rather than having is 'big breakthrough'. What does it sound like to translate the truths about 1940s Hollywood and a life in California while Hitler is laying waste to Europe? While the Holocaust ravages the world? How can one adapt all this in the language of humour to say something that no one wanted to hear at the time? Maybe still doesn't want to hear today? Come and find out.

Anne Pender, *University of Adelaide*
Should we Laugh? Australia and China at 50: Political Humour on the Stage

The Australian New Wave playwright John Romeril observed that 'The Chinese sense of humour is the closest to our own that I have come across … Their sense of image and language is very earthy, rooted in concrete images. The subjects are often sex, power and money.'[1]

2022 marks the 50th anniversary of the formal relationship between Australia and the People's Republic of China. It was 1972 when Gough Whitlam set about establishing ties with Beijing, sending the first ambassador in 1973. From 1975 the Australia Council funded the arts and enabled exchanges and theatrical tours between the two countries that have continued until recently. The last several years have seen a strain in the relationship between Australia and China, and due to the global pandemic, touring and exchanges have been severely disrupted. Therefore, the people-to-people diplomacy of the theatre has come to a standstill.
At this point it is therefore worth remembering that from the 1980s the Chinese took up the theatre of the New Wave playwrights of Australia and appeared to relish the sense of humour of the works of Jack Hibberd and David Williamson. The touring and exchanges of the 1980s may now be seen as a highpoint of Australian-Chinese intercultural theatre.

In one significant exchange Romeril adapted a controversial satirical play by Sha Yexin that tackled the subject of corruption in the CCP. The Australian production of *The Impostor* (*If I were Real*, 1979) premiered in 1987 in Melbourne, featuring Charles 'Bud' Tingwell in the cast. The humour in the play is mischievous, resonant and politically charged. This production was part of an exchange in which the Australian, Carrillo Gantner, directed Hibberd's A Stretch of the Imagination (in Mandarin) in a successful production staged by the Shanghai People's Art Theatre the same year.

This paper reflects on the humour in both these plays, the challenges of the productions, the ways in which offensive humour and sensitivities were negotiated, and the trajectory of the New Wave in China up until 2018 when Williamson's play *The Removalists* was performed for one night only, before being cancelled. It also reflects on the extent to which theatre can provide a place of respite from political strain and the prospects for future intercultural exchange on the stage.

[1] John Romeril quoted in an article by Mike Daly, *The Age*, 25 August 1987, p. 14.

Rebecca Persic, *Curtin University*
Send in the Clowns: Donald Trump and the Politics of Ridicule

How do you solve a problem like Donald Trump? His 2016 campaign could perhaps be described as part comedy routine, part reality television spectacle. Outrageous tweets, chaotic rallies, zingers as political rhetoric, flamboyant and superlative opining, all render his performance as stupid and utterly ridiculous in the eye of the liberal. Given this, why is it that satirists expressed a newfound impotency in the wake of the Trump campaign? Robert Smigel, the creators of television show *South Park*, satirist Armando Innaucci, and more, expressed their outrage and bafflement at trying to satirise a figure who was considered by them, to be a certain stimulant of comedic material. Perhaps we can attribute satire's frustration and dumbfoundedness to the limitations found in the literature of humour studies. Here, ridicule's meaning and function has perhaps been too conveniently assumed to be a stable, common-sensical concept.

Following the conceptualisation put forward by Michael Billig, ridicule is commonly understood to be a practice of humour which makes fun of someone's appearance and behaviour. Here, ridicule is characterised as cruel and aggressive, and functions to inflict shame and embarrassment on the target of laughter. Fearing embarrassment and shame, it is theorised that the target of ridicule will conform to social norms. Put more simply, ridicule is typically conceptualised as having a disciplinary function. Satire, on the other hand, is framed as ridicule's self-evident inversion. While its methods reflect the same as disciplinary ridicule, it is theorised as maintaining the utmost positive political power as it is often rendered as being directed to targets of power and privilege. Perhaps the liberal failure to effectively satirise Trump is a symptom of a cultural-political climate where positioning yourself outside of the mores of the political institution has become an effective political strategy. Accordingly, is it possible that satire has changed in contemporary life, and politicians now seek out ridicule from their enemies to rally their base?

This presentation investigates the question: how has ridicule's meaning, function and relationship to power changed in contemporary liberal-democracies? This question is pursued by investigating Donald Trump's 2016 campaign as a case study.

Robert Phiddian, *Flinders University,* **& Shane Herron,** independent scholar
The "Archaeology" of 18th-century Humour: From "Humours" to "Humour"

Understanding 18th-century humour practice requires us to understand how "humour" developed as a new concept, within a specifically 18th-century social, cultural and philosophical context. This context also influences how we understand humour today. What we now think of as "humour" developed (especially, though not exclusively, through the course of the 18th century) from ancient and early modern theory of the four humours, and 18th-century authors both draw and play on the evolving associations of the term. The major theorists of this movement are the third Earl of Shaftesbury and Francis Hutcheson, and to some extent this maps a cultural movement often noted from satire to sentiment. Recent scholarship (e.g., Simon Dickie, *Cruelty and Laughter: Forgotten Comic Literature and the Unsentimental Eighteenth Century*, 2011) require one to note a persistence of harshness as a counter-current. Nevertheless, the narrative link between the two notions of "humour" is integral to an appreciation of the comic potential of self-conscious eccentricity, which we continue to associate with the "sense of humour".

Barbara Plester, *University of Auckland*
The Politics of Humour in Hybrid Work

The last two years (2020 and 2021) have disrupted, disorganized and dispersed work, workplaces, and work processes. As the social spaces of work have had to change, so too have workplace interactions and events. With much work moving online over a variety of different platforms such as Slack and Zoom, workers have adapted quickly to hybrid models of work and social interaction. Fun and humour have changed to accommodate online interactions and this paper explores how modern forms of fun and humour have developed to account for these newly necessary work practices. Qualitative data from IT companies was collected in person through interviews and observations and is combined with data collected during lockdown situations via online platforms. Findings show the innovative new ways that workplaces are promoting fun, humour, and workplace events in hybrid models of working. Our findings suggest that humour and fun have not disappeared but have taken politically correct (PC) forms that are mostly orchestrated by HR professionals or 'people and culture' teams. Such humour is highly visible, safe, friendly and workplace appropriate but speaks of a new politics of managed fun that minimises risk and fallout. We pose the question can fun and humour survive the safety of such workplace politics and ask: is this even fun anymore?

Andrea Rodriguez, *University of Queensland,* **& Valeria Sinkeviciute,** *University of Queensland*

The Other-participation in Humour Sequences: An Analysis of Self-initiation, Other-recruitment and Other-sanctioning

Humour is a complex multi-faceted activity, the functions of which range from building relationships to marking the boundary between (groups of) people. Much research has explored various types of humour sequences that happen in dyadic and smaller-group multi-party interactions. How humour is co-constructed in bigger-group multi-party interactions, however, has not received as much attention.

This paper aims to fill in this gap by analysing humour sequences that are interactionally accomplished during dinner-table conversations. The data examined in this paper is part of a bigger project on interactions in Brisbane's Spanish-speaking speech community. It consists of 97 minutes of video-recorded conversations between 10 friends who are having dinner at a restaurant. All the interactions are in Spanish, apart from some occasions where participants are talking to one of the friends who does not speak Spanish.

The analysis draws on interactional and interpersonal pragmatics approaches that focus on how participants co-construct social actions in emergent sequential practices. The analysis of the data has revealed that, primarily because of the seating arrangements, (extended) humour sequences do not involve all the parties present at the table. There are two-three groups that engage in separate humour sequences, either at the same time or not. The focus of this particular analysis is on the ways in which the *other-participant* becomes part of the humour sequence in which s/he is not initially included. In the data, this is done in three different ways: (1) self-initiation, (2) other-recruitment as well as (3) other-sanctioning. Self-initiation is accomplished when the other-participant orients to the humour sequence, through repair (¿ay qué pasó? 'oh what happened?'), showing the interest in the sequence, explicit request to be part of the interaction (yo me quiero reír 'I want to laugh') and/or embodied action. Other-recruitment is done by someone who is already involved in the humour sequence via introducing the topic to someone else, either by recruiting a specific person or by recruiting anyone else raising the voice. Finally, other-sanctioning is an interactional practice in which the other-participant includes him/herself in the sequence showing their disapproval of the humorous exchange, for instance, through embodied action such as the stop gesture.

By exploring collaborative humour sequences in bigger-group multi-party interactions in Spanish, this paper contributes to a more nuanced understanding of humour as an interactionally accomplished phenomenon.

Mark Rolfe, *University of New South Wales*
Americanization and the Idea of National Humour: Examples from Australia and Britain

The notion of a unique national humour can be easily found and taken for granted in government publicity, newspaper columns and everyday discussions. However, this concept has only existed since the nineteenth century as a result of Anglo-American developments in the concept of humour. This origin coincided with the rise of nationalism, which encouraged the widespread impulse to apply to national humour the commonplace assumptions that apply to national identity and demand uniqueness of identity, history, language and culture for a political society. The result has been the inclusion of humour in the continual discursive recreation of the nation in the form of searches for the unique national humour of a people.

However, the exclusivity associated with a national humour is undercut, firstly, by the common and historic tendency to carefully calibrate the identity, culture and humour of one nation in relation to other nations. This continuous and contingent practice is at odds with the idea of an essence or easy definition that often pervades discussion of national humour. Secondly, these suppositions of national uniqueness attached to national humour have not been reconciled with the cultural exchanges between nations that undercut cultural exclusivity.

Paradoxically, conceptions of national character and humour have been formulated in dynamic tension and in conjunction with the various phases of globalisation since the 19th century, involving political, economic and cultural transmissions, of which humour is a part. In particular, Americanization has been an important component of such transmissions. Humour has not been immune to this influence resulting from commercial popular culture dominated by America and transferring to other countries.

My argument is that we can apply to the phenomenon of humour in Australia of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the same interpretive framework of cultural transmission and modernisation applied to other aspects of American culture that arrived on Antipodean shores. To complicate matters, this Americanization sometimes also arrived via Britain as well as from across the Pacific. Meanwhile, Australians reacted with Britons in a spirit of pan-British nationalism against American culture, including humour, and the modernity it represented. A general process of dynamic tension exists in the adaptation of cultural imports of American humour alongside calibrations of Australian identity.

To sum up, there is a huge and historic complexity of tensions and transfers behind the cultural comforts of belonging to a nation-state.

Stephen Skalicky, *Victoria University of Wellington***, Britta Brugman, Ellen Droog &
Christian Burgers,** *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*
**Does Psychological Distance Influence the Effects of Satirical News? Evidence
Comparing NZ and UK Audiences**

Satirical news is a unique blend of entertainment, information delivery, and political opinion which
has become ubiquitous in various media formats around the globe (Baym, 2005; Brugman et al.,
2020; Nissenbaum & Shifman, 2020). Some effects of satirical news have been shown to be
relatively stable – satirical news is perceived to be less serious, more liked, and more humorous
than non-satirical equivalents (Becker, 2020). In this study, we aim to further explore these effects
through a cross-cultural comparison of satirical news effects in New Zealand and the United
Kingdom.

To do so, we draw from the concept of psychological distance as defined by construal level theory
(Trope & Liberman, 2010). The basic premise behind psychological distance is that perceived
geographic, temporal, and/or social distance will influence how certain entities or events are
construed, with greater distance resulting in more abstract (vs. concrete) perceptions (Trope et
al., 2007; Trope & Liberman, 2010). Studies suggest that greater spatial distance leads to increased
believability of unlikely events (Sungur et al., 2016, 2019) as well as increased perceptions of
humour (Bischetti et al., 2020; McGraw et al., 2014). Because satirical news combines descriptions
of unlikely events in a humorous frame, we expect that geographic distance will also influence the
effects of satirical news.

We conducted a between-subjects experiment where participants in New Zealand (NZ; n = 370)
and the United Kingdom (UK; n = 282) read a satirical or non-satirical news text describing the
negative impact of increased digital device screen time on young children. The texts were further
manipulated to refer to entities and locations in either New Zealand or the United Kingdom. As
such, participants read either a satirical or non-satirical text which was either geographically close
or distant. Participants read one of these versions and then answered survey questions probing
their perceptions, emotions, and attitudes towards the texts, including perceptions of
psychological distance.

Our results found that while the expected effects of satirical news were present (i.e., satirical texts
were seen as more humorous and less serious than non-satirical texts), these effects were not
influenced by whether the text was in a geographically close or distant location. Nevertheless, both
the UK and NZ participants reported greater perceptions of spatial distance for satirical (vs. non-
satirical) texts, and the NZ participants also reported greater social distance for satirical (vs. non-
satirical) texts regardless of whether the text contained geographically distant or close locations.
This suggests that satirical news texts increased perceptions of psychological distance due to the
satirical frame itself – not just the geographic manipulation. Therefore, we conducted exploratory
mediation analyses and found indirect effects through these increased perceptions of geographic
and spatial distance. Most notably, these analyses suggest increased perceptions of spatial and
social distance amplify effects of message discounting and attenuate effects of liking for satirical

news. The quality of information delivery associated with satirical news is lower when compared to non-satirical news (Becker, 2020), which can partially be explained by a focus on the humorous aspects of satire and subsequent discounting as a legitimate source of information (Holbert et al., 2011; LaMarre et al., 2014). As such, we take these results as initial evidence suggesting spatial and social distance are potential variables to consider in future investigations of satirical news.

Mark St. Leon, independent scholar
The Politics of Circus & The Circus of Politics

To illustrate, simplify or satirise the efforts of the political class, to subvert the normative and the status quo, commentators and cartoonists often turn to idiosyncrasies and metaphors offered by the different genres of the arts. We regularly hear of the "drama" of politics and the "theatre" of parliament. The proverb "It's not over until the fat lady sings" cautions us not to assume an expected election outcome. From opera, obviously.

And then, there are the satirical tools and humorous tropes offered by circus, theatre's poor cousin. Although circus artistes rarely step outside their occupational briefs, their occupational idiosyncrasies have often been frequently mobilised to hold the political class to account. How often have we seen an inept politician caricatured as a fumbling lion tamer, as an inept tightrope walker or as a directionless trapeze artist? Or, simply, as a clown?

Perennial animal welfare issues notwithstanding, circus largely escapes the wrath and censorship of the political class. A circus performance is a largely apolitical activity more intended to entertain rather than inform. Yet, history demonstrates that the fortunes of circus and politics frequently intersect. Since the late-18th century, circus and the political class have had to confront each other and navigate a tenuous relationship, sometimes to mutual benefit, sometimes not, sometimes to the benefit of one party but not the other.

When US congressional candidates began renting circus bandwagons to make their call down Main Street, local townspeople added their endorsement by 'jumping on the bandwagon' and the expression entered popular speech. At Ballarat in 1854, aggrieved diggers commandeered the bandsmen of a visiting circus to serenade them as they erected their doomed stockade. In 1861, Australian circus man James Melville, nimbly moved his inoffensively 'Australian' circus up and down the Mississippi by steamboat, entertaining Union troops on one shore one evening and Confederates on the opposite shore the next. Posing no threat to the state, circus thrived in the Soviet Union and dampened disenchantment with its monolithic totalitarian system. Although rigorous censorship suffocated the other branches of the arts in Nazi Germany, the somersaults of Colleano on the tightwire were sufficiently apolitical to earn Hitler's patronage and endorsement. Never mind that Colleano was not really the 'Mexican' as promoted on Berlin playbills but an Australian of Afro-Aboriginal descent.

My paper will outline the nebulous relationship between circus and the political class, and how each has negotiated this relationship. As this topic is potentially much larger and deeper than a conference presentation will allow, my paper will place particular, although not exclusive, emphasis on the Australian context. Care will be taken to delineate circus from other genres that sometimes encroach on and confuse its boundaries, such as carnivals and sideshows.

Rodney Taveira, *University of Sydney*
Bulworth: **Ghost of the Past, or Spirit of the Times?**

Warren Beatty's 1998 *Bulworth* could easily be studied as a film that "speaks to the contemporary American political moment." Beatty plays Jay Bulworth, a Democratic U.S. Senator who has wandered from his early political career based in the 1960s Civil Rights movement to embrace Bill Clinton's 1990s Third Way, which demands cuts to social security and touts "family values" and "individual responsibility." Big-time donors set political agendas; the insurance industry ensures single-payer health care is dead on arrival; the interests of assumed captured constituencies (such as African Americans voting for the Democrats) are dropped after elections.

Bulworth cannily prefigures Jordan Peele's now infamous diagnosis of America's contemporary post-racial claims in *Get Out* (2017), in which white American liberals literally take over the bodies of black Americans ("I would have voted for Obama for a third term"). But rather than just focus on *Bulworth*'s prescience of the contemporary American political scene, I will consider the alternative histories that its racial comedy enacts. Following Walter Benjamin's exploration of the convergence between different historical postures such as the passing moment, experience, and remembrance, I ask what happens if we feel about in *Bulworth*'s racial blindness or stay focussed on its cringe. In other words, how might *Bulworth* apprehend historical fragments of an American political past that contains a way to illuminate its political present? Perhaps we can uncover a mode of doing politics *now* that recognises but also jokes *around* the pitfalls (pratfalls?) of an American liberalism that deracinates black political power and organisation.

Within this Benjaminian framework, Nick Holm's theorisation of "satire … in the American context, [as] a form of critical judgement through playful means" (644) that, ultimately, reaffirms the efficacy of the American political system (650), is applied to and queried by the rigged game of American social policy depicted in Bulworth, a game played on the too-familiar racialised board, or screen, where black America vouchsafes the moral and spiritual redemption of the white American liberal. Set free by his imminent death and his association with Compton locals, an increasingly truth-telling *Bulworth begins to rap*, dropping Ebonic verses about the black underclass. He courts a much younger African American activist (Halle Berry) who reconnects him to his own activist past. The Black Arts Movement founder Amiri Baraka repeatedly appears as a kind of homeless griot, enjoining Bulworth, "You got to be a spirit! Don't be a ghost!" Finally, Bulworth's messianic assassination—just like that of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X, photos of whom festoon Bulworth's office walls in the movie's opening—introduces the political potential of the call-back, a comedic technique whereby a striking connection forces an apprehension of the

past in the present that, through surprise, pleasure, and familiarity, changes, or destabilises, the present.

Benjamin, Walter. 1968. *Illuminations*. Edited by Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken Books.
Holm, Nicholas. 2018. The Political (Un)Consciousness of Contemporary American Satire. *Journal of American Studies*, 52 (3).

Rey Tiquia, *University of Melbourne*
The Philosophy and Practice of Good *Qi* Flow and Good Humour in Traditional Chinese Medicine: The Eastern "Theory of the Humours"

This paper describes the physical basis for humour according to traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) in which humorous things (funny stories or jokes that make one break into smiles or laughter) are linked with the emotions of happiness and joy. Humour is thus a function of the operations of what the presenter calls the "endogenous heart" (the physical heart and its animating forces, which generate emotions). As the Ming Dynasty scholar Yang Jizhou (1522—1620), wrote, "People who are happy suffer from less illness because their *Qi* flows harmoniously and in a relaxed manner along the acutracts" (quoted in Yang 1984). The paper explores the clinical consequences that derive from conceptualizing humour in this way and explains how such an understanding of humour may be compared with European theories in classical and medieval times of the four "humours" constituting the human body (yellow bile, blood, phlegm and black bile, which correlate with the four elements of fire, air, water and earth respectively). This Western notion of the four elements is comparable to the *wu xing* 五行 (five elements) of TCM — *mu* 木 (wood), *huo* 火 (fire), *tu* 土 (earth), *jin* 金 (metal) and *shui* 水 (water) — in the sense that in both philosophical systems the elements constitute the ultimate roots of all natural things (Tobyn 1997). The approach to humour in TCM therapy and indeed TCM itself remain deeply misunderstood, even comically feared, in Western health practices, as will be illustrated by a contemporary experience in Melbourne during the Covid-19 crisis.

Tobyn, Graeme. 1997. *Culpepers's Medicine: A Practice of Western Holistic Medicine*. Shaftesbury UK: Element.
Yang Yifang 楊依方. 1984. *Yang Yongxuan zhongyi zhenjiu jingyan xuan* 楊永璇中醫針灸經驗選 (Selected works of Yang Yongxuan on TCM and acupuncture practice). Shanghai: Kexue Jishu Chubanshe.

Oxana Vasilyeva, *Griffith University*
The Role of Humour in Russian and Serbian Independent Art

This paper draws on research in progress focusing on independent art in the Russian Federation and the Republic of Serbia. I am using the concept of independent art to mean art free from state control and established restrictive narratives. The Russian and Serbian states pursue their interests by supporting or forbidding certain forms of art. Art that promotes values in opposition to the official political course does not have a state support, moreover, it often risks being banned.

Arguments presented below draw on the findings of fieldwork carried out in the Russian cities of Moscow and Saint Petersburg and the Serbian city of Belgrade in June – September 2019, which included in-depth interviews with artists and others involved in the local art scenes. This paper explores different examples of humorous techniques used by artists in Russia and Serbia. Although one cannot claim the unequivocal affective effect of humour and satire on political processes, the ability of humour to question the usual course of events and traditional understanding of social processes should be considered.

In this paper incorporation of humorous techniques in art will be analysed. It will be argued that humour can play an important role in opposing prevailing authoritarian trends and can help artists to better articulate their disagreement with the actions of political authorities. Examples of constructive irony in art works and theatre plays from Russia and political caricature and satire from Serbia will be introduced and discussed in terms of their significance as a form of opposition to strict social and political structures. Laughter being a crucial part of the carnival action has historically been directed at strict norms of hierarchy and continues to serve as a critical instrument against conservative socio-political structures.

It will be demonstrated that irony and satire provide a decentralised view on normative frameworks, which is especially relevant in a non-democratic context where power-holders aim to control all spheres of life. Even though irony is never pure, as its meaning can be interpreted differently by different people, its critical intention to challenge fixed norms is important for this study. Laughter culture can be seen as a form of transgression, which provides an opportunity to break out of the shackles of the strict norms and to expand the scope of possible scenarios of future development. According to Bakhtin (1984) carnival is not directed towards the destruction of the existing worldview, but towards the discovery of another dimension of life. Bakhtin emphasises the power of laughter in its ability to liberate: '… not only from external censorship but first of all from the great interior censor; it liberates from the fear that developed in man over thousands of years; fear of the sacred, of prohibitions, of the past, of power' (Bakhtin 1968: 95).

Thus, art with the help of a laughter component, aims to broaden the limits of existing dogmas. Acts of ridicule provide an opportunity to subvert the actions of the authorities and, as a result, to experience the relativity of official norms. Arguably, laughter can unite people and thus reduce the degree of seriousness. Moreover, laughter can be used as an effective way to disarm authorities, since they do not always have an appropriate and equivalent response to it.

The Famous Wombat Poo IgNobel Award for Physics 2019

Scott Carver* & Ashley Edwards, *University of Tasmania*
Intestines of Non-Uniform Stiffness Mould the Corners of Wombat Feces

The bare-nosed wombat (Vombatus ursinus) is a fossorial, herbivorous, Australian marsupial, renowned for its cubic feces. However, the ability of the wombat's soft intestine to sculpt flat faces and sharp corners in feces is poorly understood. In this combined experimental and numerical study, we show one mechanism for the formation of corners in a highly damped environment. Wombat dissections show that cubes are formed within the last 17 percent of the intestine. Using histology and tensile testing, we discover that the cross-section of the intestine exhibits regions with a two-fold increase in thickness and a four-fold increase in stiffness, which we hypothesize facilitates the formation of corners by contractions of the intestine. Using a mathematical model, we simulate a series of azimuthal contractions of a damped elastic ring composed of alternating stiff and soft regions. Increased stiffness ratio and higher Reynolds number yield shapes that are more square. The corners arise from faster contraction in the stiff regions and relatively slower movement in the centre of the soft regions. These results may have applications in manufacturing, clinical pathology, and digestive health.

***Presenting on behalf of all authors: Patricia J. Yang, Alexander B. Lee, Miles Chan, Michael Kowalski, Kelly Qiu, Christopher Waid, Gabriel Cervantes, Benjamin Magondu, Morgan Biagioni, Larry Vogelnest, Alynn Martin, Ashley Edwards, Scott Carver & David L. Hu. Full article: *Soft Matter* (2021), 17 (3): 475-488. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33289747/

Scott Carver is a Senior Lecturer in Wildlife Ecology at the University of Tasmania. He specialises in the ecology and epidemiology of wildlife diseases. His research particularly focuses on wombats and sarcoptic mange disease, which indirectly led him into the wonderful world of cubed poo. In less formal setting he is occasionally known as Dr Wombat.

Ashley Edwards is a Senior Lecturer in Zoology and cardcarrying member of the Luxuriant Flowing Hair Club for Scientist). She undertakes research into the Scholarship of Learning and Teaching, as well as having a previous life studying lizard sex, lungfish sex, penis worm sex, and had dabbled a bit in wombat poo. She is good friends with Dr Wombat.

Fatemeh Nasr Esfahani, independent researcher
"Chinese Scientists Created Coronavirus; Iranians Spread It around the World": A Sociological Analysis of Political Relations between China and Iran in Persian Jokes

Over the recent centuries, humor and wit have been progressively considered as positive and influential phenomena in many areas of human life. From friendly gatherings and classrooms to workplaces and health care centers, we can see the entertaining, pleasant presence of humor in human being lives. At the same time, the production and distribution of humorous content have also been widely used in the political arena. Yet, the role of humor in political relations among countries has been less studied by humor scholars. In the present paper, I will suggest humor in general and jokes in specific as effective mediums for expressing public attitudes, expectations and reactions regarding political relations among countries.

The research's case includes the political relations between China and Iran; a topic which is shown in Persian jokes on China and COVID-19 in recent years. Using the thematic analysis technique, about 100 jokes on China that were disseminated on Persian-language social media were analyzed. The analysis revealed that the jokes contain 4 main themes: labelling and criticizing China as the creator of the virus; criticizing China's political and economic domination on Iran; satirizing the Chinese products as unreliable and non-guaranteed goods; and teasing Chinese people because of their resemblance. In addition, a sub-category of the jokes comprises self-deprecating jokes, which accompanied with praising the Chinese government due to rapid economic growth, positive social changes, and effective control of Coronavirus in the country. In conclusion, it can be said that jokes are advantageous means to signify people's beliefs, concerns and reactions about the political relations between countries; specifically in a country like Iran where there are lower levels of freedom of speech because of the non-democratic structure of the political regime. Therefore, public opinions about political relations and other governments can be examined through jokes to the best.

Xuan Li, *Queen's University Belfast*
An Investigation of Chinese Adult English Learners' Comprehension of Sarcastic Tweets in English

The use of sarcasm is pervasive in a variety of fields such as literature, social media, daily communication), for achieving multiple purposes (e.g., mocking, being humorous, and criticizing) (e.g., Kim, 2013, 2014). Due to its indirect and flexible forms, the receiver always fails to recognize and comprehend it. Thus, this phenomenon garners scholars' interest and many studies have been conducted on different topics regarding it (e.g., the mechanism of sarcasm, the characteristics of sarcasm, the receiver's response towards sarcasm, the education of sarcasm). However, few studies in L2 pragmatics have examined individuals' comprehension of sarcasm on social media, especially on Chinese English learners (Zhao, 2013). Hence, under the framework of relevance-

theory, this study investigates how Chinese English language learners (CAEL) interpret sarcasm on Twitter and what challenges they encounter when trying to understand sarcastic tweets.

To address these issues, 130 participants (100 CAEL and 30 English native speakers) will be invited to read 60 tweets (40 sarcastic tweets and 20 non-sarcastic tweets) in a questionnaire. After reading each tweet, they are required to finish three questions (a judgment task, a comprehension task and an attitude task). Next, among all the participants, about 20 participants will take part in the think-aloud protocol (TAP) (concurrent TAP and retrospective TAP). In the concurrent TAP, they need to verbalize their thought while comprehending these tweets. Then, they are required to answer some following questions in the retrospective TAP after listening to the record of their verbalization of their thought.

In general, this research findings will contribute to provide an insight into the strategies, the cues that the CAEL utilize and the difficulties they meet in the recognition and comprehension of sarcastic tweets.

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The Failure of Humour (or the Humour of Failure) in *The Dead Don't Die*

This paper foregrounds one particular use (and abuse) of humour within contemporary culture by framing Jim Jarmusch's horror-comedy *The Dead Don't Die* (2019) as an indictment of the neoliberal drive towards creative sterility. Taking the form of a zombie narrative wherein the protagonists are at least partially aware that they inhabit a film, *The Dead Don't Die* offers a metacritique of an established tradition whereby self-aware humour is used to breathe new life into commercially exhausted subgenres. Through this commentary, the film commiserates its own failure to replicate the innovative use of ironic self-awareness by undermining the humorous potential this process has hitherto represented. In doing so, Jarmusch's postmodern reflection on the archetypical zombie film questions the political efficacy of self-reflexive humour by foregrounding capitalism's ability to commodify the avant-garde and assimilate resistance.

In 1996, Wes Craven's *Scream* reanimated the slasher film subgenera by adopting what Valerie Wee deems "hyperpostmodernism". This phenomenon, she argues, is identified by "a heightened degree of intertextual referencing and self-reflexivity' alongside 'a propensity for ignoring film specific boundaries" (44). While Wee's rigid delineation of this term is debatable, the phenomenon has undoubtedly found a place in contemporary culture and can be recognised wherever a text

incongruously foregrounds aspects of its own generic form. Notable examples from outside the Gothic mode include Marvel's *Deadpool* films and the Amazon series *The Boys*, both of which offer humorous reflections on the superhero cinematic craze by drawing attention to the logical inconsistencies presupposed in the franchises they reference. It is the contention of this paper that *The Dead Don't Die* implements an analogous form of (hyper)postmodern self-awareness only to repudiate its artistic and cultural value. Consequently, the film's deadpan subversion of genre conventions *fails* to provide an unexpected source of humour to some extent, yet succeeds in foregrounding the predictability that self-parody, self-awareness and meta-humour obscures.

An overt cynicism and fatalism results from *The Dead Don't Die*'s reflection on self-reflection and causes Jarmusch's characters to suffer and die beneath an exhausted sense of inevitability. By the film's conclusion all narrative arcs are reduced to component 'beats' before ending in anti-climaxes so incongruous (given the expectations dictated by its generic form) that the conventions of the zombie film itself appear lifeless – as if the core concept is being forced through the motions by the neoliberal drive to exploit every modicum of commercial potential. Whether intentional or not, Jarmusch's film articulates a timely comment on the political efficacy of self-aware humour by undermining the sense of levity and creative potential that this reflexivity has previously represented. In the process of demonstrating this, this paper will show how *The Dead Don't Die* embodies the cultural stagnation obscured by such meta-critical texts, becomes a tragicomic epitaph to self-aware critique, and uses humour to question the longevity and radical potential of postmodernism itself.

Wee, Valerie. 2005. The Scream Trilogy, "Hyperpostmodernism," and the Late-Nineties Teen Slasher Film. *Journal of Film and Video*, 57 (3,): 44-61.