

The Humour Studies Digest

Australasian Humour Studies Network ([AHSN](#))

April 2017



Israeli Journal of Humor Research: An Australian Contribution.

Hold the Dates!

*The 24th Conference of the Australasian
Humour Studies Network (AHSN)*

hosted by the

*Centre for Tourism and Regional
Opportunities*

*Central Queensland University, Cairns
Campus*

2-4 February 2018

The 24th AHSN Conference will be held in beautiful downtown Cairns at CQ University's Centre for Tourism and Regional Opportunities from mid-afternoon of Friday 2 February to evening of Sunday 4 February 2018.

Its theme will be "*Humour: How Does it Travel?*"

The Call for Papers will be announced soon with details of the theme and the submission process. Information about travel and accommodation options in the relaxed environs of balmy downtown Cairns, as well as registration and post-graduate scholarships, will also be posted on the AHSN website as soon as available.

Organizing Committee

Dr Anja Pabel, CQUniversity Australia

Dr Jessica Milner Davis, University of Sydney

Dr Bruce Findlay, Swinburne University of Technology

Enquiries:

Submission of proposals and speakers,
contact Dr Bruce Findlay, E: bfindlay@swin.edu.au

General Enquires:

Contact Dr Anja Pabel, E: pabel@cqu.edu.au

THIS EDITION

Hold the Dates!

*The 24th Conference of the Australasian
Humour Studies Network (AHSN)*

2-4 February 2018

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Seminar by Assoc. Prof. Robert Phiddian, Flinders University presented by AHSN and Dept of English, University of Sydney

WHEN: Wednesday 17 May, 3.00-4.30 p.m.

WHERE: Room S226, John Woolley Building (A20), Manning Road, University of Sydney
<http://sydney.edu.au/maps/campuses/?area=CAMDAR>

WHO: All welcome! Refreshments available!

For catering purposes, please let Jessica Milner Davis or Peter Kirkpatrick know if you plan to come: jessica.davis@sydney.edu.au and peter.kirkpatrick@sydney.edu.au

TITLE: "Gulliver and Satirical Catharsis"

ABSTRACT: 'But, by what I have gathered from your own Relation, and the answers I have with much Pains wrung and extorted from you; I cannot but conclude the Bulk of your Natives to be the most pernicious Race of little odious Vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the Surface of the Earth.' (*Gulliver's Travels*, II, vi.)

Why is the King of Brobdingnag's sentence so enduringly exhilarating? On propositional content it should be merely demoralising, but that has never been its emotional effect in my personal or teaching experience. It (and other similar moments in *Gulliver's Travels*) enact some sort of satirical catharsis, mobilising in readers emotions like those defined by modern neuropsychology as the CAD (contempt, anger, disgust) triad of negative emotions. The application of ideas from experimental psychology to eighteenth-century literature clearly runs the risk of being reductive. If, however, they are deployed with due sensitivity to historical context (especially contemporary conceptions of the passions) they can be used to inform a new and significant account of the cathartic power of Swift's best known work. This paper will read for satirical catharsis in some signal passages of Books Two and Four of *Gulliver's Travels*, in the light of a dialogue between early modern passions and late modern emotions. It extends work commenced in an earlier account of Swift's *saeva indignatio*, the epitaph, and 'A Beautiful Young Nymph'.

On-Line Humour Survey – Dept of Psychology, University of Zurich

Reminder And Request For Urgent Action

Many thanks to those members who responded to our earlier email request for participation in a brief survey designed to validate a new humour scale. However, so far, numbers responding have fallen a bit short of what is needed to make a valid Australian contribution. So near and so far!

We'd be very grateful if more of you would be kind enough to take the 10 minutes needed to complete the survey and make sure there is a valid Australasian sample in this world-wide study.

Just go to: <https://de.surveymonkey.com/r/HumorAustralasian>

Many thanks,

Bruce Findlay and Jessica Milner Davis

Designing Humor In Human-Computer Interaction (HUMIC 2017) Mumbai, India, 25 Or 26 September 2017

<http://workshop.colips.org/humic/>

Workshop Organized In Conjunction With Interact 2017, Mumbai, India, 25-29 September 2017

<https://Www.Interact2017.Org/About>

Introduction

Humour is pervasive in human social relationships and one of the most common ways to produce a positive affect in others. Research studies have shown that innocent humour increases likeability, boosts friendship, alleviates stress, encourages creativity and improves teamwork. Humour embraces various types of expression - both verbal and non-verbal - and can be used to enhance the interaction outcome while being socially and culturally appropriate.

While humour is a well-established branch in artificial intelligence and natural language processing communities, in the human-computer interaction field humour is rather regarded as marginal research topic, despite its positive effects scientifically proven by decades of research. Therefore, in this workshop we aim to explore challenges in designing and evaluating humourful interactions, as well as benefits and downsides of using humour in interactive tasks with artificial entities.

Contributions

HUMIC (HUMor in InteraCtion) welcomes position and scientific papers from a wide range of disciplines, such as human-computer interaction, computational linguistics, artificial intelligence, social robotics, psychology, media, arts etc. Topics expected include - but are not limited to:

- Computational humor approaches & applications
- Humorous virtual agents & social robots & chatbots
- Linguistics and non-linguistic challenges in designing humor
- Evaluation approaches for humorous interactions
- Humorous interactions with and within online communities and social networks
- Cultural and social norms for appropriate humorous interactions

Proceedings

The accepted workshop papers will be published in the official adjunct conference proceedings. For format and submission procedure consult the HUMIC web site <http://workshop.colips.org/humic/>

Important Dates

- 26 April 2017: Paper Submission Deadline
- 7 June 2017: Paper Acceptance Notifications
- 21 June 2017: Camera-ready Submission Deadline
- 1 July 2017: End of Early Bird Registration
- 25 or 26 September: INTERACT Workshop Days

Organizers

Andrea I. Niculescu (Institute for Infocomm Research (I2R), Singapore)

Anton Nijholt (University of Twente, The Netherlands, & Imagineering Institute, Malaysia)

Alessandro Valitutti (Università di Bari, Italy)

Rafael E. Banchs (Institute for Infocomm Research (I2R), Singapore)

For more information consult the HUMIC website or contact the workshop organizers at humic2017@gmail.com

Members' New Humour Research Publications

Karen Austin. Deadly Funny: The Aboriginal Stand-up Comedians Cracking up Australia. *The Conversation*, 29 March 2017. At: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-03-29/deadly-funny-the-aboriginal-comedians-cracking-up-australia/8396586>

Khin-Wee Chen. 2016. 'Sarcasm Might be Entertaining but it Doesn't Solve our National Problems': What Happens When a Malaysian Politician Plays the Fool? *Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia*, 48 (2016): 142-166.

Jocelyn Chey. 2016. Cantonese *xiehouyu*: Sardonicism in a Regional Context under Threat. *Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia*, 48 (2016): 167-181.

Janet Hadley Williams, ed. 2016. 'Duncane Laideus Testament' and Other Comic Poems in Older Scots. STS 5th Series, No. 15. Edinburgh: The Boydell Press for the Scottish Text Society.

Rebecca Higgie. 2017. Public Engagement, Propaganda, or Both? Attitudes Toward Politicians on Political Satire and Comedy Programs. *International Journal of Communication*, 11 (2017): 930-948. At: <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/5675>

Ann Lever Lee. 2016. 'Push Me Pull You': The Complex Relations of Audiences, Censorship and Satirical Political Theatre in Malaysia and Indonesia. *Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia*, 48 (2016): 182-200.

Jessica Milner Davis. 2016. Introduction to Satire and Offence in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Hong Kong. *Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia*, 48 (2016): 131-141.

Jessica Milner Davis, ed. 2016. Satire and Offence in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Hong Kong, 22nd Australasian Humour Studies Network Conference, 6-8 February 2015, Selected Papers. In *Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia*, 48 (2016): 135-200.

Doctoral Student Profile

Blak Comedy and Indigenous Cultural Perspectives on Humour

Angelina Hurley (UTS)

My doctorate in Creative Arts involves two components, the first being a major creative writing project, and the second a written dissertation. The major creative writing project is the development of a series of written scripts for an Australian Indigenous comedic television show, entitled Reconciliation Rescue. The written dissertation is entitled *Blak Comedy and Indigenous Cultural Perspectives on Humour*. Both are a study of, and an insight into the humour and comedy of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia.

My interest in the genres of humour and comedy derives from two areas. First and foremost it comes from myself as Aboriginal person, an Aboriginal woman, my life experience and perspectives, added to which are comedic influences of immediate and extended family, friends and community members.



On researching the topic of Aboriginal humour for a Phd, Professor Lillian Holt discovered a definition of humour as deriving from a Latin word meaning to moisten¹, to loosen, to be the opposite of rigid. She also acknowledges as I do, that it provides a difference of perspective, hence in undertaking this investigation my intent is not to find or create a specific definition of what Blak or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Humour is, but to identify and showcase a uniqueness that is mostly covert within Australian Indigenous communities themselves.

I have observed that most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander humour and comedy has been expressed through the arts such as the media of theatre, film, dance and visual arts. There exists only a small amount of literature specific to the topic of Australian Indigenous humour via newspaper, magazine and journal articles, interviews, performance reviews and some academic writings. Until recently, research and writings relating to the humour of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples has been fairly new and untouched. What has been missing is the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander humour and comedy as a potentially genre in itself. I am interested in identifying the role humour and comedy plays in addressing everyday to serious issues that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The potential for the broader appeal and influence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander humour and comedy on Australian culture and identity, and also on Australia as a country, it is one of my goals and objectives.

This is how my interest in comedy and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander humour inspired me to develop a proposal for my doctoral project and dissertation investigating the representation of comedy and humour in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. My own practice of writing comedy has been evolving since 2006. I have been investigating and practising this genre through the medium of literature with papers and newspaper articles, comedic stories and film scripts. In 2009 one of my stories *Aunty Maggie and the Womba Wakgun*,² was developed into a short film.

The aim of my research is to investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander humour and comedy by identifying features such as voice, origins, and expression. There are a few common themes I will discuss including:

- historical representation;
- humour as the tool to confront issues;
- humour as an education tool;
- the representation of our humour through various media including visual arts, dance, theatre, literature, music and through the tradition of oral story;
- Indigenous international comparisons;
- and, to discuss the use of comedy as a reconciliatory process.

Hence, the major component of my Doctorate of Creative Arts is represented by scripts for a comedic television series entitled Reconciliation Rescue. Where my goal in creating the television series is to add to the discourse and raise questions about the reinforcement of negative stereotypes and narratives about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, to dispel myths and misunderstandings.

I also hope that further discussion will be developed around the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in television and in mainstream media. Will there come a time where proper representation, positive portrayals, and differing perspectives, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are common within the psyche of non-Indigenous Australians? Will this happen within an Australia that continues to package Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples into a box of the other?

1. Oxford Dictionaries. 2015. Oxford Dictionaries Language Matters. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/humour>. [Accessed 22 April 15].
2. Flickerfest. 2009. Short Film Distribution Catalogue. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://flickerfest.com.au/distribution/film?id=3720>. [Accessed 30 March 2017].

Doctoral Student Profile

Sung-Ju Suya Lee awarded her PhD (RMIT)

AHSN member Sung-Ju Suya Lee, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University, Melbourne, has just been awarded her PhD, and will be attending her Doctoral Graduation Ceremony in May 2017. With the guidance of her senior supervisor who is also an AHSN member, Associate Professor Craig Batty, she was able to complete her investigation into farce comedy screenwriting with the knowledge that her research would reflect rigorous and insightful findings.

Suya's creative practice PhD, "The Wedding Jackpot: A Creative and Critical Investigation of the Farce Genre in the Context of Screenwriting and Feature Film", consists of two parts: a feature film screenplay, The Wedding Jackpot, and an accompanying critical dissertation that explores, analyses and reflects on the creative process. The screenplay is written in the genre of farce comedy, and explores the efforts of a young woman to find a fake fiancé. The dissertation provides a framework for understanding, guiding and applying farce comedy techniques to the practice of screenwriting.



Despite the genre of farce being old fashioned, it can still pull an audience and make money. This can be shown in the recent box office blockbusters, *Bridesmaids* (2011) and *The Hangover* (2009–2013) franchise. Yet, there is a gap in the literature on farce screenwriting, both academically and within industry/professional discourse. Since there is limited analysis and research from screenwriting and comedy theorists, research led to the key theatrical genre theorists: Eric Bentley, Albert Bermel and Jessica Milner Davis. Audiences, critics and academics do not generally acknowledge what they are watching as a farce, most preferring to simply categorise it as comedy.

In this PhD, Bentley's ten farce elements are analysed and compiled into six principles, designed to inform the screenwriter: violence; mocking; humour; plot; characters; and, pacing. Then these principles are applied to the analysis of a contemporary produced screenplay case study, *Bridesmaids*, in order to further understand and examine the mechanisms of farce screenwriting.

Finally, the theories and techniques under examination are applied to a discussion of the screenwriting process that *Suya* uses in her screenplay. In the Conclusion, she highlights two new story devices that she has created: 'The Farce Scatter Graph Line Chart' and 'The Ping Pong Method'. Through this process, her findings seek to address the current gap in the field of farce screenwriting studies, which she hopes can be of use to other screenwriters, novelists and authors across different literary and screen forms.

She first presented a portion of her PhD research at the 22nd AHSN Conference hosted by the University of Sydney in 2016 titled "Bridesmaids: A (Bridged) Critical Analysis of the Farce Comedy in the Case Study of a Successful Produced Screenplay." Next, she presented at the 23rd AHSN Conference at The Federation University of Australia, Ballarat, in 2017 with a presentation titled "The Farce Scatter Graph Chart - a new framework method to evaluate farce films." For further research, she intends to improve both the creative story methods within the context of farce comedy screenwriting.

Laughter And Logic: Ancient Greek Comedy And Modern Issues

An illustrated talk by Alfred Vincent

on Wednesday 26 April, at 7.30 pm,

at Marrickville Library, corner of Marrickville and Petersham Roads

The playwright Aristophanes (c.446-c.386 BCE) wrote comedies on issues that seem urgently topical: war, women in politics, wealth inequality, political scapegoating and how to cope in an age of populism when truth appears to be undermined. Looking at selected comedies, we will explore his comic logic: how he made people both laugh and think about pressing and even traumatic issues. The talk will include a glance at the broader history of ancient Greek comedy and at its influence on later European theatre.

The event is part of the Greek Festival of Sydney. Admission free — everyone welcome. Further info: 9335 2173.

Israeli Journal of Humor Research: An Australian Contribution.

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Editor's Introduction

Lydia Amir. Visiting Professor, Department of Philosophy, Tufts University, Medford, MA, USA

Regular Articles

Aristotle's Insistence on Humor Being Proper: A Syllogistic Corollary in His Ethics of Aretaic Happiness
Wei He Xu. Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vermont, USA

Kinds of Pleasure and Types of Laughter in the Analysis of Laughter-Provocation
Mary-Ann Cassar. University of Malta, Malta

On Resemblance

Ayelet Lilti. Institut Universitaire Elie Wiesel, Paris, France

On Nietzsche's Gay Science

Thiago Ribeiro de Magalhães Leite. Sao Paulo University, Sao Paulo, Brazil

Commentaries

Cunnilingus Take a Joke? Or How Introspective Are WE about Linguistics?
Joshua Nash. University of New England, Australia

The Humour Studies Digest

The Australasian Humour Studies Network (AHSN)

'We put the "U" back into "HUMOUR"!'

Send newsletter submissions to our Co-Editors:

Michael at michael.meany@newcastle.edu.au or Jessica at Jessica.davis@sydney.edu.au

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