

PROGRAM FOR
APRIL 2007 COLLOQUIUM OF THE
AUSTRALASIAN HUMOUR SCHOLARS NETWORK
with Post-Graduate Section
on Humour Research
and special focus on
“Humour and Satire in an ‘Age of Terror’”

KINDLY HOSTED BY

FLINDERS HUMANITIES RESEARCH CENTRE
FLINDERS UNIVERSITY
BEDFORD PARK (JUST SOUTH OF ADELAIDE CBD)

Wednesday 11th and Thursday 12th April 2007

PROGRAM ENQUIRIES:

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TIMETABLE

WEDNESDAY 11 APRIL

9.00 – 9.20 am	Registration; Tea and Coffee
9.30 – 10.00	Dr Carmen Moran (with Prof. Paul Thomas and Dr Jessica Milner Davis), Social Sciences and International Studies, UNSW; <i>Laughter and Asthma in an Age of Terrorism</i>
10.00 – 10.30	Dr Bruce Findlay, Psychology, Swinburne University of Technology, <i>Humour, Emotional Intelligence, and Social Competence</i>
10.30 – 11.00	Dr David Rawlings (with Wei-Lin Toh), Psychology, University of Melbourne; <i>Styles of Humour and Lateral Preference</i>
11.00 – 11.30 am	Morning Refreshments
Parallel Session A:	
11.30 – 12.00	Mr Daryl Peebles, doctoral student in Management, University of Tasmania; <i>The Role of Humour in a Crisis – a Manager’s Perspective</i>
Parallel Session B:	
11.30 – 12.00	Mrs Sylvia Alston, doctoral student in Communication, University of Canberra, Laughter Club trainer; <i>Nothing to Laugh at: Humour as a Means of Coping with Pain and Stress</i>
Pre-Lunch Plenary Session	
12.00 – 12.30	Mr Rodney Marks talks about his appointment as Visiting Professor-at-Large/Hoaxer and Jokester, University of NSW
12.30 – 1.30 pm	Lunch
1.30 – 2.00	Dr Michael Lloyd, Social & Cultural Studies, Victoria University of Wellington; <i>“Naked Man Appals”:</i> Humour, Categorisation and the Moral Order
2.00 – 2.30	Dr Nick Prescott, English and Cultural Studies, Flinders University, <i>“A Spoonful of Sugar...”:</i> Humour, Terror and the Scatological in Thomas Pynchon’s “Gravity’s Rainbow”
2.30 – 3.00 pm	Afternoon Tea
3.00 – 3.30	Ms Maren Rawlings, doctoral student in Psychology, Swinburne University of Technology (with Dr Bruce Findlay); <i>“I do it Differently at Work”:</i> Differences in Humour in Different Environments
3.30 – 4.00	Dr Paul Jewell, Education, Flinders University; <i>The Value of Vulgarity: Principles, Persons, Dogma and Humour</i>
4.00 – 4.30	Dr Jessica Milner Davis, Senior Visiting Fellow, Arts and Social Sciences, UNSW; <i>Humour as Social Capital in Australia</i>
4.30 – 5.00	Mr David Cronin, Actor, Clown, Playwright; <i>How Long is an Age of Terror?</i>
5.00 pm	Pre-dinner Refreshments – Announcement of Dinner Arrangements

TIMETABLE

THURSDAY 12 APRIL

8.30 – 9.00 am	Registration; Tea and Coffee
9.00 – 9.40	Mr Michael Atchison, 40 years' Editorial Cartoonist, <i>The Adelaide Advertiser</i> ; Key-note Address: "The Importance of Being Silly: A Working Life Cartooning"
9.40 – 10.10	Mr Lindsay Foyle, Pocket Cartoonist for <i>The Australian</i> ; <i>Bigots Complaining of Bias?</i>
10.10 – 10.30	Discussion, led by Assoc. Prof. Haydon Manning, Political and International Studies, Flinders University
10.30 – 11.00	Morning Refreshments
11.00 – 11.30	Ms Sally McCausland, Legal Dept, SBS Broadcasting Service, Sydney; <i>Satire, Parody and Terrorist Copyright Owners: New Rights for Australian Comedians under the Copyright Amendment Act 2006</i>
11.30 – 12.00	Dr Elizabeth Handsley, Law; and Assoc. Prof. Robert Phiddian, English and Cultural Studies, Flinders University; <i>Political Cartoonists and the Law</i>
12.00 – 12.30	Discussion, led by Assoc. Prof. Haydon Manning, Political and International Studies, Flinders University
12.30 – 1.30 pm	Lunch
1.30 – 2.00	Mr Anton Crouch, Adj. Research Fellow, Biological, Earth & Environmental Sciences, UNSW; <i>Musical Parody and German World War 2 Propaganda</i>
2.00 – 2.30	Dr Carmen Moran, School of Social Sciences and International Studies, UNSW; <i>Humour, War and the Citizen – the Case of Nazi Germany</i>
2.30 – 3.00	Afternoon Tea
3.00 – 3.30	Ms Mira Crouch, Visiting Fellow, Sociology and Social Anthropology, UNSW; <i>Holocaust Sent up?</i>
3.30 – 4.30	Discussion, led by Dr Peter Gerdes, former Assoc. Prof. of Film, UNSW, and Correspondent for <i>Neue Zürcher Zeitung</i>
4.30	Departure

ABSTRACTS

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Nothing to Laugh at: Humour as a Means of Coping with Pain and Stress

This paper explores the nexus between laughter and pain. It is based on an ongoing research project to examine the role of humour in helping people cope in painful and traumatic situations. The research includes interviews with medical practitioners, cancer survivors and their carers, bereaved parents, general practitioners and emergency service personnel. For those whose job is to care for the sick and dying and to support their families, laughter can be a release, a means of reducing carer fatigue. Preliminary findings suggest that humour can play an important role as a diversionary technique. It can also provide a release from overwhelming sadness and be an effective communication tool enabling those in difficult situations to talk about what would otherwise remain unsaid.

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How Long is an Age of Terror?

A high ranking Egyptian official tackles the topic of terror, putting it in perspective. Sweeping back and forth through history, he looks at how the subversive nature of laughter brought on the tactics of terror by the powers that be, the current authorities. Has the Age of Terror finally come of age?

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Musical Parody and German World War 2 Propaganda

The Nazi ban on “degenerate music” included jazz and blues yet, as is often the case with the implementation of ideology, an undercurrent of pragmatism was always there. Although banned in Germany, American jazz and swing recordings were available in the occupied territories and, from 1940 to 1943, German English-language propaganda radio broadcasts included “cover” versions of popular swing numbers in the Glenn Miller and Benny Goodman style.

The paper concentrates on the propaganda recordings of “Charlie and his orchestra” – a swing orchestra of high musical standards, lead by Lutz Templin and named after its vocalist Karl “Charlie” Schwedler. The re-worked lyrics were written by a team that included the English Nazi-sympathiser Norman Baillie-Stewart and the contemporary response to the results varies from disbelief to shock to laughter.

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Holocaust Sent up?

Auschwitz is the case study in point here: the image – indeed, the concept – that has become emblematic of the destruction of Jewry by the Nazi regime. The death-camp itself (“das Ding an sich”) cannot be subjected to satire; extermination of humans draws too hard a line around evil to give irony room to play. (This contention is supported, rather than negated, by the plain nastiness of Anti-Semitic Auschwitz jokes.) On the other hand, after-the-event representations of, and attitudes to, the Holocaust, can prompt the moraliser – arguably, no longer the moralist, given the terrain of diverse WWII values –

to dig for a foothold from which snide observations can be made. On the basis of an example or two, I shall identify some of the targets (for instance, Holocaust-education programmes) that are seen from such standpoints, and consider the perceptions that emerge. Finally, I will suggest that, contrary to the implicit intention of the Holocaustics, there are redemptive possibilities in their defiance of the taboo on the subject.

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Humour, Emotional Intelligence, and Social Competence

This study is largely a replication of Yip and Martin's (2006) study of the relationships between humour styles, social competence and emotional intelligence. However, where they had university student participants, the present study was largely community based and covered a wider range of ages. Respondents were also asked about their psychological well-being. One of the research questions explored was whether humour is a better predictor of social competence and emotional intelligence than the latter variables are as predictors of humour use. Or is this a chicken and egg question?

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Bigots Complaining of Bias?

The Oxford dictionary says a bigot is "an obstinate and intolerant believer in a religion or a political theory". It's a simple definition, and one usually reserved for those considered a little unbalanced. However, judging by their writings, the word "bigotted" could easily be seen as applicable to the views of a small political collective who regularly contribute to *Quadrant* and to the opinion pages of some Australian newspapers. Their expressed views are obstinate because they incessantly complain eg about the existence of leftwing bias in the ABC, despite numerous independent inquiries that have found no such bias. The claims continue, ignoring such findings – is it because the ABC doesn't always conform to a far-right political perspective?

Such commentators can appear to their readers intolerant of everything not politically acceptable to their own rightwing commune's theories. A good display of such seeming political bigotry which, I believe, obstinately ignores facts, can be found in an OpEd piece by Janet Albrechtsen in *The Australian* (03.01.2007), which claims that all political cartoonists in Australia are biased against John Howard and never attack the Labor Party. Nothing written about cartoonists in Australia over the past 100 years could be further from the truth, as I shall discuss.

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Political Cartoonists and the Law

Political cartoonists often talk of getting their work "legalised" before it goes into the newspaper. Just what laws are they in danger of infringing? There is precious little evidence of cartoonists being taken to the courts in Australia (only one unsuccessful suit for libel, see *Harry Seidler and Associates Pty Ltd v John Fairfax and Sons Ltd* (1986) *Aust Tort Reps* 80-002 at 67,476) and a clear cultural acceptance for cartoonists pushing the barriers of free speech.

We propose to explore how soundly based this cultural acceptance is in Australian law, in three legal areas. In one of these areas our previous research strongly predicts an answer, while the other two are more open to conjecture:

1. Defamation law: We propose to argue that the defense of "fair comment" would be sufficient to protect cartoonists and their employers from anything short of extremely malicious behaviour. We will take account of the new federal laws proposed in this area.

2. Racial violence legislation: Under what circumstances might a cartoon fall foul of this legislation in the states where it exists?

3. Sedition laws: The Federal Attorney General has insisted often that the newly revised sedition laws “are not meant to catch cartoonists”. While prosecuting cartoonists would clearly be unattractive politically, it is not clear why we should be confident that this is so legally. This needs to be explored.

This paper is intended for an edited collection on Australian cartoons, so it will focus particularly on the legal situation of political cartoonists in newspapers. However, what we have to say about that should have considerable relevance to the status of satirists in other media, literary, and artistic forms. It will be a contribution to the understanding of the legal basis of free speech in Australia.

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The Value of Vulgarity: Principles, Persons, Dogma and Humour

Characteristically, belief systems that support the use of terror are dogmatic. It is the nature of dogma to be authoritative, averse to questions and intolerant of ridicule. For humorists, sardonic questions are stock in trade, and they delight in besmirching lofty ideals with irreverent vulgarities, no matter whose precious belief systems might thereby be offended. The “Social Brain Hypothesis” postulates that the demands of understanding each other’s beliefs provides the environmental pressure for the evolution of human intelligence. This paper argues that exchanging beliefs serves the construction of cooperative communities and the avoidance of error. Both humorists and dogmatists seek to establish communities with a shared sense of identity, but fundamentally, they are averse to each other and are irreconcilable.

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“Naked Man Appals”: Humour, Categorisation and the Moral Order

The relation between the genders predates the “Age of Terror”, and tends to involve more subtle forms of warfare, nonetheless, the issue of the place of humour in this human theatre of conflict is equally germane. This paper picks up such issues by looking at a humorous competition - *The Adventures of Naked Man* - that has been called the longest running dick joke in publishing history. If it is agreed that the relation between the genders is conflict-ridden, therefore making it a serious topic of social analysis, then what are we to make of a caption competition based upon the competition's protagonist being the sole naked person in a drawn setting where, because of some convenient object or body position, his penis is obscured from sight. Entrants to the competition submitted a caption to go with the drawn setting, the task being to make humour; the common solution to this task being some form of 'dick joke' based upon double entendre. To avoid “appalling” more delicate readers, these captions had to pay careful attention to the boundaries of good taste, perhaps indicating a “moral order” lurking in the background. This paper analyses the full corpus of Naked Man episodes in regard to the finely detailed work of categorisation. That is, what is deemed acceptably risqué and what is deemed near-obscene is closely connected to easily-made typifications of people and the typical activities they engage in. We see that the power of the moral order is initially locatable in the accountably visible foreground, something that is perhaps overlooked in academic work relying on ghost-like norms and values.

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“Satire, Parody And Terrorist Copyright Owners: New Rights For Australian Comedians Under The Copyright Amendment Act 2006”

In December 2006 new rights to use copyright material for the purposes of “parody or satire” came into

effect. Australians can now use “fair” extracts of popular songs, books, TV shows, films and other material for the purposes of parody and satire. The changes represent a rare loosening of legal restrictions on free speech in the “age of terror” and a world first for the protection of satire under copyright law.

This paper looks at the implications of these new laws with reference to examples such as satirical Australian TV program ‘The Chaser’ and its humorous use of Osama bin Laden’s terrorist tapes.

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Humour as Social Capital in Australia

Australians pride themselves on a liberal attitude to the social uses of humour. Federal Attorney-General, Philip Ruddock, recently paid tribute to “our irreverent streak” by proposing legal reform in favour of parody and satire (see paper by Sally McCausland). Writing in December 2006 for the popular press, he claimed, “Our cartoonists ensure sacred cows don’t stay sacred for very long and comedians are merciless on those in public life”. So far, such permissive attitudes to humour have served Australia well.

Robert Putnam’s recent work (2001, 2004) on multi-cultural, multi-ethnic communities has identified lack of trust and connections (and hence lack of sense of common community) as directly proportionate to the degree of ethnic diversity in a community. Since such diversity contributes positively to the future of modern nations (such as Australia), he urges paying special attention to methods of building connectedness or “social capital” (in the sense used by David Hume in the 18th century and elaborated by James Coleman in 1990).

According to Putnam, popular culture, education, national symbols and common experiences (eg national service) can have an important role in building “a broader sense of we”. He cites as an integrative example the shift for middle America from identifying “Jewish humour” as being Jewish, to regarding Woody Allen and Jerry Seinfeld as “American comedians”. Perhaps the common experience for Australian new arrivals of forcibly adapting to having the mickey taken (whether gently or otherwise) has tended to operate informally in the past to acculturate diverse migrant groups, whether ethnic or religious. Current tensions over “Islam versus the West” and other social divisions offer an interesting test of this traditional way of bridging Australian divides; but there are some wins to be chalked up to humour.

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Humour, War and the Citizen – the Case of Nazi Germany

In Australia, many writers on humour and war state humour under stress is a particularly Australian characteristic, exemplified in Australian soldiers’ use and style of humour. In previous papers, Moran has challenged the notion of a humour unique to the Australian soldier, looking at documents from the Second World War. She reported greater differences across citizen and soldier humour compared with differences between soldiers of different nationalities, at least those from the Australia, the UK and USA. This paper now looks at citizens’ humour, and focuses on humour of members of the Axis, rather than the Allies – in particular, the underground humour in Nazi Germany as documented by Hillenbrand. This humour is compared with Australian citizen humour during the war. Many factors, including the matters of safety and sampling can account for differences in humour. There is clearly no one type of war humour, and while there may be an Australian flavour to some humour, overgeneralizations about Australians as uniquely gifted in their use of humour are best avoided. The relevance of this view to ‘humour in an age of terrorism’ will be discussed.

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Laughter and Asthma in an Age of Terrorism

Terrorism has always been with us in one form or another, and its link to both physical and psychological disturbances has long been discussed anecdotally. Recent studies have more formally reported a relationship between exposure to contemporary terrorism events and increased physical symptoms. For example, incidents of asthma increased in the aftermath of 9/11. As well as societal benefits from humour, discussed elsewhere in this conference, we need to recognise that individuals' wellbeing may benefit from laughter in such extreme conditions. Laughter, however, is believed to potentiate asthma symptoms. In an era where we agree we need to laugh, how do we reconcile the benefits of humour with the potential problems of laughter in asthma? This paper addresses this question with some evidence on the relationship of laughter to breathing difficulties in asthma and non-asthma samples. It extends a paper presented in 2006, with additional participants and data analyses.

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The Role of Humour in a Crisis – a Manager's Perspective

This is a work-in-progress which, in part, uses the Anzac Day 2006 accident at the Beaconsfield Field Gold Mine in Northern Tasmania to explore the use of humour as a coping mechanism in a crisis situation. Two miners trapped following an earth tremor were finally rescued after fourteen days of entrapment a kilometre below the Earth's surface. A work colleague was killed by the initial rock fall on the day of the earthquake.

What became a major focus for media reports of the miners' peril was the humour of the two men throughout their ordeal. Headlines such as "Larrikin humour relieves tension" and "Jokes relieve pressure" were common. As part of a broader study of the value of humour in the workforce, this paper aims to examine the role humour has played in helping workers cope in situations of extreme stress and pressure.

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"A Spoonful of Sugar...": Humour, Terror and the Scatological in Thomas Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow

This paper examines the "leavening" function of the exuberant slapstick-infused humour in American author Thomas Pynchon's darkest and most famous work, *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973). The novel is, on one level, one of the most confronting and despairing anti-war novels written in the English language, while on another level it is a convoluted picaresque tale, brimming with outrageous slapstick sequences, intensely scatological passages and bawdy vaudevillian songs. This paper argues that the humour in *Gravity's Rainbow* (as in much of its author's other work) functions as a complex "humanist salve", in order to keep the reader engaged in what would otherwise be an almost unbearably tortuous and depressing read. Furthermore, stylistically and thematically, the humour in *Gravity's Rainbow* helps to demonstrate many of Pynchon's most elaborate intertextual devices and develop his central theme: paranoia as it operates within the minds and lives of human beings living in the postmodern moment.

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Styles of Humor and Lateral Preference

A range of mostly clinical literature has associated aspects of humor production and appreciation with dysfunction of the right cerebral hemisphere. The present studies extend this research by investigating

how lateral preference is associated with the way normal individuals use humor in their everyday lives. In two studies, groups of undergraduate students completed the Humor Styles Questionnaire of Martin et al. (2003) and a chimeric faces measure of lateral preference. The Humor Styles Questionnaire measures Affiliative, Self-enhancing, Aggressive, and Self-defeating humor styles. In both studies, Affiliative humor was associated with a leftward (right hemisphere) preference when viewing chimeric faces, with the relationship stronger in males than females. The second study also employed the Humour Preference Test, a new measure of humour preference, and explored the possible mediating effects of personality. The data give general support, using a non-clinical sample, to the literature associating the right hemisphere with sense of humor.

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'I do it differently at work.' Differences in Humour in Different Environments

Martin (2006) has suggested as the basis for the *Humor Styles Questionnaire* (Martin, et al., 2003) that people can be distinguished from each other in the ways that they see themselves using humour in everyday situations including work interactions. The aim of the present research was to find out if people differ in the way they report using humour in the work place compared with the way they report using humour socially or at home. As part of a larger study, participants responding to an Internet questionnaire, were asked to write free responses about their use of humour in these situations. The results were analysed using QSR NVivo 7. Generally people responded that they did have differences in the type of humour and ways of delivery between the three environments and these will be discussed. The amount and type of humour used at work also differed when they recalled they were stressed compared to when they were relaxed.