

17th Australasian Humour Studies Network (AHSN) Colloquium
on
“Time, Place and Humour”

TIMETABLE: SATURDAY 19 FEBRUARY 2011

- 8.15 – 9.00 am** *Registration; Tea and Coffee*
- 9.00 – 9.10** **Daryl Peebles, Convenor, *Welcome and Introduction of Guest Speakers***
- 9.10 – 9.40** **Mr Jon Kudelka, Cartoonist for *The Australian, The Mercury and The Sunday Telegraph; On the Art of Cartooning***
- 9.40 – 10.10 Assoc. Prof. Haydon Manning, Politics & Public Policy, Flinders University, and
Assoc. Prof. Robert Phiddian, English, Flinders University, *May the Less
Threatening Leader of the Opposition Win: The Cartoonists' View of Election 2010*
- 10.10 – 11.00 Discussion on cartooning and politics
- 11.00 – 11.30 am** ***Morning Refreshments***
- 11.30 – 12.00 am Dr Ronald Stewart, Prefectural University of Hiroshima (& Dr Marguerite Wells,
Independent Scholar, Dr Jessica Milner Davis, Letters, Art & Media, University of
Sydney), *'If I were Prime Minister': ŌTA Hikari and Japanese Satire*
- 12.00 – 12.30 Prof. Michael Ewans FAHA, Drama, University of Newcastle, *Aristophanic
Elements in Monty Python's Life of Brian*
- 12.30 – 1.30 pm** ***Lunch***
- 1.30 – 2.00 Dr Ben McCann, French Studies, University of Adelaide, *“OSS 117 - un peu de Sean,
beaucoup de conneries”*: *Jean Dujardin, James Bond, and the Art of the Spoof*
- 2.00 – 2.30 pm Mr Maxwell Walkley, French and Mediaeval Studies, University of Sydney, *Simplistic fabliaux
Light-hearted Amusement or Comic Aggression?*
- 2.30 – 3.00 pm** ***Afternoon Tea***
- 3.00 – 3.30 Dr Jan Lloyd Jones, English, ANU, *Hardy and Comedy*
- 3.30 – 4.00 Mrs Mira Crouch, Social Science & International Studies, UNSW, *Sending up a
Sacred Cow? A Piece of Cake!*
- 4.00 – 4.30 pm Prof. Brian Wheeler, Management, University of Tasmania, *Stick of Rock, Cock?
Donald McGill: King of the Saucy Seaside Postcard*
- 4.45 – 5.15 Discussion
- 5.15 pm – 6.00** ***Cartooning Display, Courtesy of Mr Jim Bridges, cartoon historian
Announcement of Dinner Arrangements***

TIMETABLE SUNDAY 20 FEBRUARY

8.30 – 9.00 am *Registration; Tea and Coffee*

9.00 – 9.30 Mrs Maren Rawlings and Dr Bruce Findlay, Psychology, Swinburne University of Technology, *Humour about the Self: Enhancing/defeating or Deprecating*

9.30 – 10.00 Ms Bernadette McCosker and Prof. Carmen Moran, Psychology, Charles Sturt University, *Differential Effects of Self-Esteem and Interpersonal Competence on Humour Styles*

10.00 – 10.30 Dr Debra Aarons, Languages & Linguistics, UNSW, *Jokes and the Linguistic Mind*

10.30 – 11.00 am *Morning Refreshments*

Parallel Session A:

11.00 – 11.30 Mr Colin Hoad, Postgraduate research student, Education, Latrobe University, *Humour and the Outdoors*

11.30 – 12.00 Dr David Rawlings, Psychological Sciences, University of Melbourne, *Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the GELOPH<46>*

12.00 – 12.30 Dr Bruce Findlay (& Ms Meg Walters), Psychology, Swinburne University of Technology, *Gelotophobia: Is it just Social Anxiety Repackaged?*

12.30 – 12.45 Discussion

Parallel Session B:

11.00 – 11.30 Mr Marshall Heiser, PhD candidate, Queensland Conservatorium of Music, *Playing with Music: Report on (2 ½ years') Progress in Researching Humour and Music*

11.30 – 12.00 Mr Michael Meany, Design, Communication & IT, University of Newcastle; PhD candidate, Victoria University, *Incongruity: Human-Like Machines and Machine-Like Humans*

12.00 – 12.30 Dr Jessica Milner Davis, Letters, Art & Media, University of Sydney, *Henri Bergson's Theory of the Comic: Laughter and Time*

12.30 – 12.45 Discussion

12.45 – 1.30 pm *Lunch*

Parallel Session A:

1.30 – 2.30 Ms Bronwyn Batten, Performer & producer (2010 recipient, Ian Potter Cultural Trust travel grant and Australia Council Art Start grant), *Entertainment is not a Dirty Word: The Amalgamation of Comedy and Art in Contemporary Australian Performance*

Parallel Session B:

1.30 – 2.00 Mr Anton Crouch, Independent scholar (formerly Earth Sciences, UNSW), *Visual Humour on Radio*

2.00 – 2.30 Dr Paul Jewell, Philosophy, Flinders University, *Some Contrasting Examples of Asperger Syndrome in Popular Humour*

2.30 – 3.00 pm *Afternoon Tea*

3.00 – 3.30 Dr Angus McLachlan, Psychology, University of Ballarat, *The Role of Aggressive Humour in Determining Status and Solidarity within the Work Place*

- 3.30 – 4.00 Dr David Bell, Royal North Shore Hospital; Psychiatric Medicine, University of Sydney, *Suicidality, Psychosis, Mania and Distress: A World-First Randomised Controlled Trial of Humour in an Acute Psychiatric Ward*
- 4.00 - 4.30 Discussion; reports on international meetings (International Summer School on Humour and Laughter, Zurich; International Society for Humor Studies Conference, Hong Kong)
- 4.30 – 4.45 Dr Marguerite Wells, Independent scholar and *Kyōgen* actor, *Translation and Performance: 'The Battle of the Black and White Rice-Cakes' (from the play Yabuhara Kengyō by INOUE Hisashi, trans. M. Wells)*
- 5.00 pm - 6.00 pm Farewell Drinks and Departure**
- 6.15 pm Review Panel Meeting**

ABSTRACTS OF PRESENTATIONS

Papers, Workshops and Performances

Dr Debra Aarons, Languages & Linguistics, UNSW

Jokes and the Linguistic Mind

Much of our knowledge of the structure and (to a lesser degree) functions of our language is claimed to be tacit, or unconscious. Jokes that exploit the structure of a particular language may access and bring to consciousness previously tacit knowledge in speakers of that language. For instance, the children's joke:

Q: What's brown and sticky?

A: A stick

causes the listener to notice that the word *sticky* (gluey, adhesive, from the verb *to stick*) may also mean, *stick-y* meaning "stick-like". Similarly, the bumper sticker *My karma ran over my dogma* causes us to notice that the meaningless syllable *-ma* does a sterling job in affecting meaning change from the unremarkable *My car ran over my dog* to the rather more remarkable slogan *My karma ran over my dogma*.

I'll examine jokes that play at the phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic levels of language, in order to demonstrate how they bring aspects of tacit knowledge of language to consciousness, particularly in native speakers.

The approach adopted here is situated within a broadly Generativist tradition in linguistics. The work is intended to make some contribution to the study of cognitive science, specifically regarding the nature of tacit knowledge of language. The study does not draw on or amplify established theories of humour, such as General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH), because its concern is with what jokes tell us about language, not with what language tells us about jokes. One of its assumptions is that some aspects of linguistic humour remain untranslatable because of its deeply language-specific nature. The study is based on linguistic rather than experimental evidence, although its claims, in the main, are amenable to experimental neurophysiological inquiry.

Ms Bronwyn Batten, Performer & producer (2010 recipient, Ian Potter Cultural Trust travel grant and Australia Council Art Start grant)

Entertainment is not a Dirty Word: The Amalgamation of Comedy and Art in Contemporary Australian Performance

In the theatre canon, comedy is still a performance genre that largely remains exempt from the realms and recognition of 'high art'. However, many young Australian theatre artists are combining the two to create an exciting style of comedic performance that is responding to and representative of contemporary Australian culture.

Melbourne-based collective *The Last Tuesday Society* is a devoted community of artists

committed to pushing artistic boundaries and questioning the nature of theatre and art. These artists are cultivating intelligent and complex forms of comedy that incorporate elements of dance, circus, theatre, puppetry and performance art. This paper will examine some of the young artists and companies involved in this movement and the methods, themes and driving forces behind their practice.

Dr David Bell, Royal North Shore Hospital; Psychiatric Medicine, University of Sydney
Suicidality, Psychosis, Mania and Distress: A World-First Randomised Controlled Trial of Humour in an Acute Psychiatric Ward

Is an acute psychiatric ward the right time and the right place to use humour? On a ward like this, there are extremes of human behaviour and the complexities of the mind are always evident. There is hopelessness, fear, chaos, anger and paranoia compressed into a potentially volatile and restricted environment. It is an environment where engagement between staff and patients is paramount but extremely challenging. There is a genuine empathic art to this engagement and humour can play a key role. This study is the world's first randomised controlled trial of active humour on an acute psychiatric ward. It has produced some extraordinarily fascinating insights into the role of humour in human connection in a very difficult environment. The research was not easy but listening to the recordings of humorous exchanges between patients and staff provides broad insights into the mind, the human spirit, and the vast potential of humour.

Mr Anton Crouch, retired geologist (formerly Biological, Earth & Environmental Sciences, UNSW)

Visual Humour on Radio

Why do listeners laugh when someone throws a pie on a radio programme? What does a listener "see"? The paper begins with Cantril and Allport's 1935 conclusion that "radio entertainment is more like vaudeville than it is like any other established type of amusement" and continues with an examination of some approaches to how radio works. For example, what is the role of "verbal slapstick" (Murray)/"linguistic slapstick" (Douglas) in generating the illusion of vision on radio? Is Arnheim's "In praise of blindness" and the aesthetic conclusion that "a wireless broadcast must not be envisaged" compatible with Julian's "theater in the mind"? In an age of "canned laughter", we tend to forget that radio plays and radio variety shows were performed in front of an audience and that the relationship between the radio listener and the studio audience was complex. Brief filmed records of two popular radio comedy shows from the 1940s will be included – Kay Keyser's "College of musical knowledge" (1940) and Ralph Edwards' "Truth and consequences" (1942). References:

Arnheim, R., 1936. *In praise of blindness*. In Strauss, N. & Mandl, D. (eds), 1993.

Radiotext(e). NY: Columbia University Press

Cantril, H. and Allport, G. W., 1935. *The psychology of radio*. NY: Harper & Bros (reprint ed., NY: Arno Press, 1971)

Douglas, S. J., 2004. *Listening in*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press

Julian, J., 1975. "This was radio: a personal memoir." Quoted in Hilmes, M. and Loviglio, J. (eds), 2002. *Radio reader: Essays in the cultural history of radio*. NY, Routledge

Murray, M., 2002. "The tendency to deprave and corrupt morals': Regulation and irregular sexuality in golden age radio comedy." In Hilmes, M. & Loviglio, J. (eds), 2002. *Radio reader: Essays in the cultural history of radio*. NY, Routledge

Mrs Mira Crouch, Social Science & International Studies, UNSW

Sending up a Sacred Cow? A Piece of Cake!

"Derek Robinson is a British author best known for his military aviation novels full of black humour." Thus spake Wiki, quoted ad infinitum on the Web. *Piece of Cake* (1983) is perhaps

the best example of his work, as it targets the myths surrounding “The Few” of the Battle of Britain. The novel has also been judged as “moving”, which raises the question of the way in which black humour – a hair’s breadth removed from satire – can sit side by side with, even project, affect and empathy. This paper will consider possible answers, some of which may lie in the humour’s specific targets, as well as in the manner of its dispersion throughout the text. Indeed, the prior matter to be tackled is: how black and how funny are the different layers of the Piece of Cake?

Dr Jessica Milner Davis, Letters, Art & Media, University of Sydney

Henri Bergson’s Theory of the Comic: Laughter and Time

In 1927, Henri Bergson’s Nobel Prize speech expressed his highest hopes for the future of (hu)mankind which lay, as he saw it, in increasing empathetic and moral *rapprochement* between peoples. This he considered an essential balance to material and mechanical progress. Yet his influential lecture on the importance of laughter and the essence of comedy (*le comique*) saw both as depending on a “temporary anaesthesia of the heart”. How to reconcile these two ideas?

If Bergson was rare among philosophers of his day in expending much thought on laughter, he was even rarer to base his analysis on experiential comic responses – those of audiences in the Parisian theatres of the 1890s, where luminaries such as Labiche, Feydeau and Sardou had their farces performed to great acclaim. The theory of the mechanical and its importance in triggering a laughing response directly derives from Bergson’s familiarity with the plot and linguistic devices of 19th century French farce; which in turn inherited a tradition dating back to the theatre of Molière and even mediaeval *farce. Plaqué sur le vivant* (superimposed on the living), the mechanical is responsible for the temporary nature of Bergson’s “anaesthesia of the heart”.

This paper will explore Bergson’s belief that living in time (i.e. what is measured out by the clock and by cyclical repetition) can suppress human flexibility, creating a kind of phantom human life; and how he saw laughter, with all its social consequences for good and ill, as part of a humane reaction to such domination, a way to regain lost sensibilities.

Prof. Michael Ewans FAHA, Drama, University of Newcastle

Aristophanic Elements in Monty Python’s Life of Brian

Aristophanes’ comic style comprises a zany, irreverent and taboo-free humour, a slender plot used as a peg on which to hang comic routines, and a dominating fantasy idea. Its greatness was largely lost in the Menandrian and Roman tradition of character- and situation-driven comedy, which was taken up by Shakespeare, and which has its unworthy descendents in the romances and sit-coms of modern TV and film.

But Aristophanes’ anarchic and powerful alternative has had remarkable heirs, among them Ben Jonson (especially in *Volpone*), Joe Orton – and the Monty Python team. This paper will argue that *The Life of Brian* (like *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*) is a truly Aristophanic film in its comic conception – though the extent of the Pythons’ political and social commitment is in the author’s view less deeply conveyed than that of Aristophanes himself.

Dr Bruce Findlay (& Ms Meg Walters), Psychology, Swinburne University of Technology

Gelotophobia: Is it Just Social Anxiety Repackaged?

This study examined my prejudice that Gelotophobia is really no more than an extreme version of social anxiety. Participants were a community sample of 153 people (60 men, 90 women, 3 who didn’t admit!), mean age 33 years. They responded to an online battery of tests including the Social Phobia Scale, Fear of Negative Evaluation, Fear of Positive Evaluation, the Social Interaction Anxiety Scale, the Personal Feeling Questionnaire (which measures proneness to shame and guilt), and, of course, Gelotophobia. Extensive analyses indicate that

although scores on Gelotophobia are highly correlated with scores on various measures of social anxiety, it is a conceptually distinct construct, and instead appears to more closely resemble a proneness to shame. Unsurprisingly, however, people who are socially anxious are very likely to also suffer from Gelotophobia.

Mr Marshall Heiser, PhD candidate, Queensland Conservatorium of Music

Playing with Music: Report on (2 ½ years') Progress in Researching Humour and Music

This research project originated with the personal observation that several of the author's favourite popular recording artists were equally renowned for their sense of humour as for their musical, lyrical and compositional inventiveness. Initial speculation regarding a possible relationship between humour and creativity was confirmed by Avner Ziv's studies indicating that the two are positively correlated (1984). Further theories and experimental/empirical studies regarding the intersection of the humour, play and creativity constructs were therefore explored with the aim of developing methods with which to facilitate improved creative flow within aspects of the popular music making process for future practitioners (both as individuals and groups). A practical component - the making of a full-length album (40mins) of original compositions arranged, performed and engineered by the author - provided the opportunity for critical reflections (both qualitative and quantitative) upon the effectiveness of adopting a more *playful* approach to music making informed by humour/play/creativity studies. In particular, the work of Lieberman (1977), Apter (1982), Ziv (1984), Oring (2003) and others will be discussed with regard to the key concepts of 'mental set-breaking' (the manipulation/transformation of perceptions) and 'play framing' (the suspension/transcendence of 'reality' by acting 'as if').

References:
Apter, M. J. (1982). *The experience of motivation: The theory of psychological reversals*. London/New York: Academic Press.

Lieberman, J. N. (1977). *Playfulness: Its relationship to imagination and creativity*. New York: Academic Press.

Oring, E. (2003). *Engaging humor*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Ziv, A. (1984). *Personality and sense of humor*. New York: Springer Pub. Co

Mr Colin Hoad, Postgraduate research student, Education, Latrobe University

Humour and the Outdoors

This 'work in progress' is research aimed at exploring the dynamic that exists between humour and emotional engagement with learning tasks in the context of Outdoor Education for year 9 students. The research looks to identify what perception about the relationship between humour and learning is present during humorous episodes as well as the level of importance of humour for students' emotional engagement.

Case studies of 4 school trips will be carried out for a Year 9 cohort whilst they undertake Outdoor Education experiences on the Great Ocean Walk on Victoria's coastline. One-to-one interviews will be held, with data analysed and major themes reported, and subsequent pedagogical implications will be drawn from the findings.

The study aims to further understand and 'bridge the gap' between student rating of humour within pedagogy (anecdotally high) and the limitations of most research carried out in this field. Pedagogical implications may be that humour is often seen as a distraction from the 'work' of education; or perhaps that it can be helpful in many aspects of the psychosocial and cognitive domains significant in teaching and learning.

Dr Paul Jewell, Philosophy, Flinders University

Some Contrasting Examples of Asperger Syndrome in Popular Humour

Key characteristics of Asperger syndrome, an intellectual disability related to Autism, are poor social skills and inappropriate literal interpretations. Recent studies have shown that people with Asperger syndrome have difficulty recognising jokes. They face a double

difficulty with regard to humour: the likelihood that they will not get jokes and the likelihood that they will be the butt of jokes. The seventeenth century philosopher Thomas Hobbes defined laughter as superiority over another's disability, and the fourth-century joke book *Philogelos* mocks characters who interpret things literally. A joke in *Philogelos* appears again in the novel *Catch 22* but the novel reverses the target of the ridicule to comment on the absurdity of war. A current television series *Doc Martin* goes further by celebrating the intellectual difference of the eponymous hero and using it as a vehicle for satire.

Dr Jan Lloyd Jones, English, ANU

Hardy and Comedy

There has long been a tendency to regard Thomas Hardy as a great tragic writer and to ignore or underestimate the value of his comic works. But Hardy himself wrote: "If you look beneath the surface of any farce you see a tragedy, and, on the contrary, if you blind yourself to the deeper issues of a tragedy you see a farce". He regarded tragedy and comedy not as mutually exclusive but as interrelated forms, and protested frequently against interpreters who dismissed the comic elements in his work and chose to read him solely in a sombre light. Nevertheless, the gloomy interpretations continue.

This paper aims to redress the balance a little by offering an overview of Hardy's use of the various comedic forms of farce, humour, satire, and wit. It looks at how these forms relate to one another, where and why Hardy made use of them, what his historical sources were, and why this side of his work has been so frequently neglected.

Dr Ben McCann, French Studies, University of Adelaide

"OSS 117 - un peu de Sean, beaucoup de conneries": Jean Dujardin, James Bond, and the Art of the Spoof

French comic actor Jean Dujardin has become best known for his role as Hubert Bonisseur de la Bath in the immensely popular *OSS 117: Le Caire, nid d'espions* (2007, Haznavicius) and *OSS 117: Rio ne répond plus* (2009 Haznavicius). Both *OSS* films are detailed period pastiches that parody the conventions of the Euro-spy film, and its tropes - production design, cinematography, title sequences - are all fastidiously recreated.

This paper will demonstrate how the *OSS* films, and Dujardin's performance style in particular, conform to what Jerry Palmer has called 'the logic of the absurd' and Steve Seidman calls 'comedian comedy'. Dujardin's lithe, angular form, his facial tics and fluid physicality are all perfectly suited to this collision. His background in cabaret and stand-up comedy, and his honed tradition of audience interaction and direct address, bestows upon Dujardin the privileged status of a performer who is playing with the codes and conventions of narrative cinema, and who is constantly negotiating the tensions between the comically plausible and implausible.

Ms Bernadette McCosker & Prof Carmen Moran, Psychology, Charles Sturt University
Differential Effects of Self-Esteem and Interpersonal Competence on Humour Styles

Whereas it is expected that personality is linked to humour style, it remains to be demonstrated whether self-esteem and interpersonal competence differentially predict humour style. Using an online survey, 201 participants completed the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ), the Rosenberg Self Esteem Inventory and the Interpersonal Competence Questionnaire. The age of the sample ranged from 18 to 63 years, with a mean of 30 years. There were 145 females and 56 males in the study. A hierarchical multiple regression was used to test the unique contributions of self esteem and interpersonal competence to HSQ subscales, when the influence of age and gender were accounted for. High self esteem and high interpersonal competence predicted higher affiliative humour scores. In contrast, high self esteem and low interpersonal competence predicted higher aggressive humour scores. Our results show that while self-esteem is related to humour style, interpersonal competence is a necessary variable to distinguish the direction or 'valence' of humour when self esteem is

high. We discuss these and other results further in the full presentation.

Dr Angus McLachlan, Psychology, University of Ballarat

The Role of Aggressive Humour in Determining Status and Solidarity within the Work Place

Over the years, there has been much fascinating research into humour in the work place. In 1967, Sykes, in an observational study, identified a rich pattern of obscene humorous exchanges among workers in a Glasgow printing works that marked out roles associated with age and marital status. More recently, Rawlings, using questionnaires in an Australian sample, has identified that “stirring” varies with gender and position. In general, it would seem that the willingness of workers to accept humorous insults enhances the solidarity of the group, while a person’s ability to reciprocate quickly and wittily may confer some status within that group. Anecdotal evidence and more formal research will be offered in support of this notion of humour use within the work place, and an additional argument will be offered that this form of humorous exchange is more common among lower status and less skilled workers than it is among professionals.

Assoc. Prof. Haydon Manning, Politics & Public Policy, Flinders University, and Assoc. Prof. Robert Phiddian, English, Flinders University

May the Less Threatening Leader of the Opposition Win: The Cartoonists’ View of Election 2010

National Affairs correspondent for the *Age*, Tony Wright, expressed a widespread frustration at the media-managed frivolity of the 2010 federal election campaign when he asserted on radio that “this campaign has been made for the satirists.” From our observation of the editorial cartoons of the campaign, the level of engagement with significant issues was too slight even for the satirists to get much of a handle on events. The success of this meta-analysis of the political game reflects the trouble for satirists in more traditional modes of finding anything much to grasp onto. They had to rely a lot on physical caricature of the leaders, as there simply wasn’t much more than a woman with red hair and a big nose up against a man with big ears often photographed coming out of the surf in his “budgie-smugglers” (or bathers), to seize on. In looking through the cartoons, this campaign reminded us of 1998, another election when a struggling first-term government was opposed by a small-target opposition, and where the theme of the cartoons could be summarised as “Australia Deserves Better”.

Mr Michael Meany, Design, Communication & IT, University of Newcastle; PhD candidate, Victoria University

Incongruity: Human-Like Machines and Machine-Like Humans

This presentation offers an overview of a PhD project that incorporates a creative project and an exegesis. The creative project will develop a pair of online chatbots (computer-based conversational agents) that will interact as ‘comedian’ and ‘straight man’ when a human user delivers a topic. The exploration of humour provides the opportunity to explore “what it means to be human by moving back and forth across the [unstable] frontier that separates humanity from animality” and by extension, the frontier between the human and the non-human in general (Critchley, 2002, p.28). Henri Bergson, in his seminal essay on laughter, stated a “new law” of humour, “We laugh every time a person gives us the impression of being a thing” (Bergson 2005, p.28 (original publication, 1911)). The project, in part, tests if Bergson’s law will stand if it is inverted; will we laugh every time a thing gives the impression of being a person? In addition, does this pairing of the human-like machine and machine-like human constitute an incongruity that can only be partially and momentarily resolved? References:

Bergson, Henri. 2005. *Laughter: An essay on the meaning of the comic*. Trans. C. Breerton

and F. Rothwell. Mineola, New York: Dover (original edition, 1911, The Macmillan Company, New York)
Critchley, Simon. 2002. *On humour: Thinking in action*. New York and London: Routledge

Dr David Rawlings, Psychological Sciences, University of Melbourne

Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the GELOPH<46>

The study reports a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the GELOPH<46>, a self-report questionnaire measuring gelotophobia (fear of being laughed at) developed by Ruch, Proyer and colleagues. Employing student participants, a model comprising two highly correlated factors was obtained, leading to the production of two reliable scales. The two scales were highly correlated ($r=.76$) but semantically differentiated, and were labeled Discomfort (concern with affective and bodily reactions) and Vulnerability (concern with perceived social inadequacy). The indices of fit for the model compared favourably with those for the 15-item short scale currently employed in research in the area. When gender and cultural background were investigated, males obtained higher scores than females on the Vulnerability scale. Individuals reporting a “Chinese” cultural background obtained higher gelotophobia scores than ‘Anglo-Australians’ on all forms of the scale, particularly Vulnerability. In summary, gelotophobia can be conceptualised as a coherent construct with two strongly related components.

Mrs Maren Rawlings and Dr Bruce Findlay, Psychology, Swinburne University of Technology, *Humour about the Self: Enhancing/defeating or Deprecating?*

Australians pride themselves on their self-deprecating sense of humour. The initial question for this investigation is whether the self enhancing/defeating dichotomy proposed by Martin et al. (2003) reflects people’s behaviours in different contexts, or whether the dichotomy could be extended. Homer opened the *Illiad* (800 BCE, trans. 1974) with Olympian Gods being entertained by Hêphaistos, who made himself the butt of the joke, to teach his mother a lesson. Aristotle (trans. 1969) commented on humour about the self, and he recommended societal redress for excessive hubris (trans. 1962). Panksepp (2000) was suspicious of those who laugh too much at their own remarks. Humour about the self has been connected with superiority (Hobbes, 1615/1914); aggression (Freud, 1095/1960; Van Giffen & Maher, 1995); coping (Freud, 1928; Kerr & Apter, 1991); intelligence (Billig, 2005); leadership (Veale, 2004); and also with sex differences (Lampert & Ervin-Tripp, 1998; Van Giffen & Maher, 1995). The aim of this exploratory paper is to identify theoretical bases for humour about the self and to generate items that purport to measure this type of humorous behaviour.

Dr Ronald Stewart, Prefectural University of Hiroshima (& Dr Marguerite Wells, Independent scholar, Dr Jessica Milner Davis, Letters, Art & Media, University of Sydney)

‘If I were Prime Minister’: ŌTA Hikari and Japanese Satire

Some years ago Japanese comedian ŌTA Hikari’s TV program *If I were Prime Minister* brought a new style into Japanese comedy. He even received death threats for satirising the Imperial family, which it appears he hadn’t done. This paper will examine the social and practical constraints on satire in present day Japan, compared to some other societies and cultures.

Mr Maxwell Walkley, French and Mediaeval Studies, University of Sydney

Simplest Fabliaux: Light-hearted Amusement or Comic Aggression?

Fabliaux are relatively short verse narrative texts from the French Middle Ages. Chaucer himself, of course, was inspired by the medieval French *fabliaux* in some of his “Canterbury Tales”. A *fabliau* aims at the provocation of laughter in the audience,

a fact reflected in Joseph Bédier's classic definition of the genre: "*des contes à rire en vers*". Robert Guette preferred to underline the "*divertissement*" (recreational) aspect of the *fabliaux*, rather than the jocular one, thus accommodating more successfully in the genre many stories which include a moral. Amongst the 150–odd texts recognised to-day as surviving *fabliaux*, procedures of inciting laughter vary from the simplistic to the sophisticated, although it must be admitted that most plots border on the slapstick and the verbal humour is often most kindly described as "basic". Canvassing of all the themes occurring in the *fabliaux* is obviously not a practical option for this short paper; however, a close examination of the features of a few simplistic ones, and especially two texts, "La Male Honte" and "Des Deux Anglois et de l'anel", will allow the highlighting of both the general characteristics of the *fabliaux* genre and one specific theme: that of mocking and even satirizing the English.

Dr Marguerite Wells, Independent scholar and *Kyōgen* actor

Translation and Performance: 'The Battle of the Black and White Rice-Cakes' (from the play 'Yabuhara Kengyō' by INOUE Hisashi, trans. M. Wells)

Yabuhara, the Blind Minstrel (see Japan Playwrights Association (eds), *Half a Century of Japanese Theater, 1960s*, Kinokuniya, Tokyo, 2004) is a picaresque black comedy about an 18th century Japanese villain who makes his way to the top ranks of the Guild of the Blind by nefarious means (theft, extortion and murder) and through great talent in the recitation of ballads. His speciality was the mock ballad which was a parody on the heroic ballad. The heroic ballads were principally based on the adventures of the hero Yoshitsune in the long-running battles between the two warrior families, the Heike and the Genji. This ballad, translated into iambic pentameter, is a parody on the fall of Yoshitsune. INOUE Hisashi, the playwright, said that it took him as long to write this ballad as it did to write the rest of the play. The Great Chrysanthemum Gate that is Lord Whitecake's ultimate...er...downfall, is the insignia of the imperial family, but may also be seen to resemble the...er...anus.

Prof. Brian Wheeler, Management, University of Tasmania &

Stick of Rock, Cock? Donald McGill: King of the Saucy Seaside Postcard

For millions, the risqué, saucy seaside postcard was once an integral part of the holiday routine. No more. Postcards have, to a large extent, been superseded by technology. And, many would argue, changing tastes: the saucy seaside postcard is of another time. Or is it? From pier revue to peer re-view, this paper explores the legacy of Donald McGill, undisputed doyen of the genre, past master of the pithy innuendo and double-entendre, the King of Seaside Saucy Postcard, and well might he wear his crown. Although his kingdom was extensive, the seaside was his true domain. It was there in the heady atmosphere of the hustle and bustle of the milling crowds that McGill's medium worked its magic. And it was there, in the realm of the raucous, that sales of his cards burgeoned as the visiting hordes took to his humour with gusto. With sales of over 300 million cards, the sheer volume, the extraordinary proliferation of his work, astounds.

Primarily for a British audience, the saucy seaside postcard has no real equivalent elsewhere. It is essentially English humour we are looking at here, captured and contextualised in time and space – itself in turn epitomising the English seaside resort of a by-gone era. "McGill's cards had a suggestive sense of vulgarity about them which has ever since been associated with the English seaside and typifies an aspect of English life and humour" (Staff, 1979, p.73). Perhaps no single resort is more so evocatively captured by, nor representative of, McGill's work as Blackpool of the late 1940's, and 1950's. Although an initial, cursory glance at content may suggest historical/spatial parochialism, I will explore the (underrated) significance of McGill to the study, at a macro level, of today's humour (and tourism). Deploying McGill's life and work as exemplar, and contextualised within the passing of time, I will draw parallels with evolving attitudes to 'acceptable' holiday experiences. I focus on

the concomitant class perspectives of high culture/ low culture and the inherent divides therein: how we choose to 'judge' others - the traveller/tourist: travel/mass tourism divide; and the hypocritical class values that underpin, or rather undermine, much of today's thinking on tourism planning, notably the charade of ego/eco/sustainable tourism. The absurdities of censorship, as applied to McGill in the 1950s, are addressed and the paper concludes with a brief 'visit' to the small but exquisite McGill museum opened in summer 2010 on the Isle of Wight, UK.

I have always believed that as academics we should eschew the absurd notions of objectivity, declare our respective interests and proceed enthusiastically. Looking at McGill is no exception. Indeed, he is the perfect subject with which to embrace another long held belief of mine: the power of the visual. The emphasis on combining the 'personal' with this 'visual' translates into the deployment of narrative and extensive use of eclectic images in presenting this paper, one which assesses McGill's relevance to the study, and analysis, of contemporary humour. Reference:

Staff, F. 1979. *The Picture Postcard and its Origins*, London: Lutterworth Press