



Australasian Humour Studies Network

THE HUMOUR STUDIES DIGEST



## 27th AHSN CONFERENCE, 3-5 FEBRUARY 2021, MASSEY UNIVERSITY, WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND

### Update from the Conference Convenor

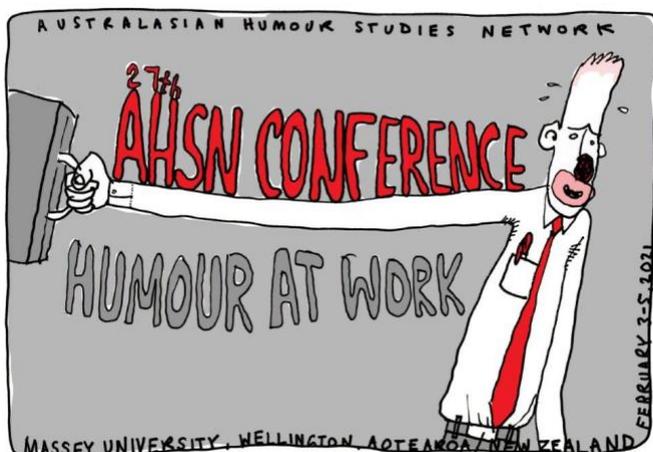
Dear AHSN Colleagues,

With the recent unfortunate news out of Victoria, the chances that a Trans-Tasman travel bubble will be in place for next February seem somewhat diminished. Our best wishes go out to our friends and colleagues in the Melbourne area.

Nonetheless, we remain cautiously optimistic, and encourage everyone interested in our event in Wellington next year to submit abstracts at the official website. Full details of the Call and the Conference theme are on the AHSN website at:

<https://ahsn.org.au/events/>

We are also currently considering the possible shape of the conference, should we not be able to go ahead with the physical event as originally planned, and are weighing up different options. We intend to make our final call regarding the future of the conference later in the year and will not open registration until that is settled.



AHSN 2021 official conference art,  
design credit Organising Committee member Bryce Galloway

### THIS EDITION

<i>27th AHSN Conference Update</i>	1
<i>Call for Proposals – Still Open</i>	2
<i>Message from the Chair of the AHSN Board</i>	2
<i>Members' New Publications</i>	3
<i>Research Student Profile – Amir Sheikhan</i>	4
<i>Research Student Profile – Matilda Knowles</i>	5
<i>Researcher Profile - Dr Sarah Balkin</i>	6
<i>Member's News – Dr Matt Shores</i>	7
<i>A Cultural History of Comedy in Antiquity</i>	11
<i>Understanding Conversational Joking</i>	14
<i>Humour and the Holocaust</i>	15
<i>Update on ISHS Conference 2020-21</i>	15
<i>Call for Papers – The Sacred and The...Profanity</i>	16
<i>Call for Papers - Laughter / Le rire</i>	17
<i>Special (Covid-madness related) issue</i>	20

Edition – August 2020

## Call still open, general submissions close: 1 September 2020

Watch for the next Digest!

Best wishes,

Nick Holm

*On Behalf of the Organizing Committee:*

**Bryce Galloway**, artist/lecturer, Whiti o Rehua School of Art, Massey University Wellington

**Nicholas Holm**, Media Studies, Massey University, New Zealand

**Meredith Marra**, Linguistics, Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington

**Stephen Skalicky**, Linguistics and Applied Language Studies, Victoria University of Wellington

---

### **Message from the Chair of the Board**

Dear AHSN friends,

More good news in this issue of the Digest! The AHSN Board and Review panel are delighted to announce the three new members who have been admitted as Fellows in the Order of the Jess-ters for 2020. In alphabetic order by surname, and with a brief description of only some of the ways in which they have contributed significantly to the AHSN over the years (and for reasons of space, leaving out their many publications), these are:



**Conal Condren**. FAHA FASSA. Member of AHSN Review Panel (foundation in 2009 to present); participated in the initial Research Seminar leading to the establishment of the AHSN in 1998; pioneer of academic courses on satire and politics (at UNSW); author of AHSN Review Procedures (2010). Respondent for AHSN/Dept of English Seminar on John Clarke's satire, Sydney University, 2016; Keynote speaker for ISHS 2021, University of Bologna.



**Mike Lloyd**. Member of AHSN Review Panel (2010 to present); presented at several ISHS conferences as well as many AHSN ones. Chair of the 20th AHSN Conference at Victoria University of Wellington in 2014, the first to be held in New Zealand, achieving good NZ news coverage. His extensive work on 'Naked Man' cartoon caption competitions (The Age newspaper) introduced the world of humour scholars to a uniquely Australasian form of risqué humour.



**Maren Rawlings**. Member of AHSN Review Panel (2009-2014). First AHSN member awarded the ISHS Graduate Student Award (Spain, 2008). Presented at several ISHS conferences as well as many AHSN ones. Her PhD (2011) resulted in the significant research publication (with Bruce Findlay), *The Development and Validation of the Humor at Work (HAW) Scale*, HUMOR (2016), which has subsequently been made use of in international research.

Please join me in welcoming these three new Fellows of the Order of the Jess-ters! We look forward to bestowing this honour on them all in person, and presenting them with the Jess-ters pin with logo specially designed by our own Lindsay Foyle - hopefully in Wellington in February 2021.

Kerry Mullan,  
Chair, AHSN Board  
A/Prof. Kerry Mullan  
School of Global, Urban and Social Studies  
RMIT University Melbourne  
E: [kerry.mullan@rmit.edu.au](mailto:kerry.mullan@rmit.edu.au)

Previous Fellow are listed on our website - <https://ahsn.org.au/about/fellows-in-the-order-of-the-jess-ters/>

---

## Members' New Publications

François Brouard and Christelle Paré. 2020. Industrie de l'humour et l'après-COVID - Estimations du nombre de places dans les salles de spectacles. *GRIH #2020-04NR, Notes de recherche*, Groupe de recherche sur l'industrie de l'humour (GRIH), Sprott School of Business, Carleton University. May. 9pp. At: <https://carleton.ca/profbrouard/wp-content/uploads/GRIHNote202004NRestimationsplacesalle20200505FBCP.pdf>

Sarah Balkin. 2020. Deadpan and Comedy Theory. In *A Cultural History of Comedy in the Age of Empire*, ed. Matthew Kaiser. 43-63. London: Bloomsbury Academic. Available at: <https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/a-cultural-history-of-comedy-9781350000827/>

Beatriz Carbajal-Carrera and Olga Sanchez-Castro. 2020. The role of secondary incongruities in cartoon appreciation. *European Journal of Humour Research*, 8 (2): 25-48. At: <https://europeanjournalofhumour.org/index.php/ejhr/issue/view/35/showToc>

*Abstract:* Failed humour in conversational exchanges has received increasing attention in humour research (see Bell 2015; Bell & Attardo 2010). However, tensions between what constitutes successful and failed humour have yet to be fully explored outside conversational humour. Drawing on Hay's (2001) classification of humour stages and using a socio-cognitive approach to pragmatics to examine responses from Spanish L1 and L2 users to differing combinations of structural and content features in cartoons, the present study aims to explore what factors contribute to successful and failed responses to multimodal humour. Previous research has predominantly investigated the role of caricature as one of the prototypical features of cartoons affecting humour communication, suggesting that this feature plays an active role in the recognition of the humorous genre (Padilla & Gironzetti 2012). Findings from the present study indicate that caricature operates not only in the recognition, but also in the understanding and appreciation stages. In particular, our results point to two other roles of caricature as a secondary incongruity and as a factor that can trigger appreciation through empathy and/or a sense of superiority. Importantly, this investigation indicates that the presence of secondary incongruities can compensate for a partial lack of understanding, highlighting the relevance that this type of incongruity has in humour appreciation. Full text available at: [https://www.academia.edu/43693998/The\\_role\\_of\\_secondary\\_incongruities\\_in\\_cartoon\\_appreciation](https://www.academia.edu/43693998/The_role_of_secondary_incongruities_in_cartoon_appreciation)

Michael Ewans, ed. 2020. *A Cultural History of Comedy in Antiquity*. London: Bloomsbury Academic. Available at: <https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/a-cultural-history-of-comedy-9781350000827/>

### Editors' Notes:

Please see the article on Michael Ewans' book below in this Digest.

The current issue of *European Journal of Humour Research* also carries an appreciative review of a book previously noticed here by AHSN member and 2018 Conference Convenor Dr Anja Pabel (Central Queensland University, Cairns): see Sabrina Francesconi, Review of Philip Pearce and Anja Pabel, *Tourism and Humour* (Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2015). At: <https://europeanjournalofhumour.org/index.php/ejhr/article/view/358>

## Research Student Profile - Amir Sheikhan

Amir Sheikhan, PhD Candidate in Linguistics, School of Languages and Cultures, The University of Queensland



Being invited to write a profile for AHSN newsletter, I was thrilled to have the opportunity to share a glimpse of my life with the humour studies community. Once I sat down to write, I was, once more, pushed into an ocean of thoughts, feelings and events, which have well depicted themselves in my life beyond where I stand now.

I was born and grew up in Isfahan, a beautiful, historical city in Iran. My passion for languages and modes of communication presented itself early on in my childhood when I showed a desire to learn new languages. Most of my free time was spent in different language classes and on being indulged in an unknown dream! When it was time to decide about my tertiary education, I was confident I wanted to study languages. I opted for doing a BA in English Translation Studies at the University of Isfahan, Iran. Subsequent to the completion of my Bachelor's, I was sure I wanted to go further. However, I also knew that the path would not be easy given the competitive entrance to top-ranked universities in Iran. Being ranked high in the university entrance examination, I got qualified to embark upon doing an MA in Linguistics at the best university in Iran, the University of Tehran, taking a step further to give life to my lifelong dream! It was then when I academically identified and started to systematically address my passion for and interest in understanding and researching the mechanism of language in use, that is, pragmatics. My MA project focussed on the speech act of condolence, an underexplored phenomenon, yet one with significant communicative impacts.

It was by no means enough for me! I have always thought I need to go even further and dig deeper. To do so, with the broader horizon that I had developed through my postgraduate studies, I decided to reach out to the best and start a PhD, but this time securing an uplifting topic, humour! I moved to the University of Queensland where I could reach my goals, and started a new sphere of my life here in Australia.

My research interests lie in pragmatics, discourse and conversation analysis, intercultural communication and of course, conversational humour. I am particularly interested in scrutinising and understanding the role of language in social and interpersonal interactions. My PhD project focusses on epistemics and its role in conversational humour in intercultural initial interactions. My research outputs so far are several published and forthcoming journal articles and conference presentations.

Courses I took and classes I attended not only helped me learn what they were designed to teach but also awakened another desire and a new perspective in me: teaching and helping others learn and reach their goals. I started my teaching career as an EFL teacher when I was a freshman: in Iran, I used to teach various courses in language schools and at universities, while acting as director of studies and serving in language policy making roles for several years. Moving to Australia, I have also pursued this and have been teaching an intercultural communication course at The University of Queensland.

As final words, I would like to use the opportunity here to express my heartfelt gratitude to two important people in my academic life without whom my story would have been different. Prof. Michael Haugh, my PhD supervisor, has not only opened the doors of his incredible knowledge of the field to me, but has always been supportive to the fullest. And Dr Vahid Parvaresh has helped me find my academic path and shape my academic identity.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss my research at: [s.a.sheikhan@uq.edu.au](mailto:s.a.sheikhan@uq.edu.au)

## Research Student Profile - Matilda Knowles

My name is Matilda Knowles, though generally I go by and publish under Til Knowles.<sup>1</sup> I am a Masters student at the University of Melbourne. My thesis looks at community and comedy podcasts, using Australian podcast *The Little Dum Dum Club* as a case study.<sup>2</sup> The research examines how the podcast creates a sense of community and authenticity through comedic performances involving larrikinism, mateship and vulnerability. The project is supervised by Dr Sarah Balkin, a theatre studies scholar who has written on Hannah Gadsby.



As is often the case in humour studies, my research is highly interdisciplinary. I am considering theory from humour studies, theatre studies and media studies. Within those fields, I am looking at comedy and stand-up, celebrity and persona, fandoms and audience, and podcasting and audio. Hyper-specifically, the thesis adds to a small but emerging field of comedy podcast scholarship that argues that podcasts provide a space in which comedians can perform a “more authentic” version of themselves,<sup>3</sup> and considers what this means in an Australian context as well as the impact it can have on listeners.

Comedy podcasts can often seem to have their own language, a unique performance space built by hundreds of hours of wide-ranging comedic content, a conversational format and the podcast medium itself. In *the Little Dum Dum Club*, this means guests and hosts can discuss everything, from running out of toilet paper in a McDonald’s bathroom, to drug addiction, to comedy as an industry. The podcast’s aggressively loyal community of listeners, in turn, can adopt the egalitarian piss-taking mateship presented on the podcast and attempt to apply it to their interactions with the hosts, guests and other listeners. Looking at larrikinism, mateship and vulnerability necessitates consideration of Australian masculinity too, along with the public “political correctness” discourse. These themes are central to the ongoing academic and public discussions of the role(s) of comedy in Australia, and I aim to further our understanding of the impact of their performance in digital media. Ultimately, I am fascinated by humour as a means of connection and comedy as a storytelling form.

I am also a pop culture commentator and reviewer with a particular interest in speculative fiction, comedy and the Melbourne theatre scene. I was the Melbourne editor of independent culture review website ‘Pop Culture-y’ (now the *Independent Arts Journal*) for four years. While there I wrote over 350 articles, interviews and reviews and introduced coverage of the Melbourne International Comedy Festival. I completed an undergraduate degree in creative writing at RMIT University, during which time I also wrote for Dilruk Jayasinha’s sketches on Channel 31’s *Live on Bowen* and started working with ‘Pop Culture-y’. I moved across to the University of Melbourne to complete my honours in literary studies. When there’s not a global pandemic keeping us in our houses, I freelance, mostly for *Time Out*.

Please feel free to contact me about my research at: [mknowles@student.unimelb.edu.au](mailto:mknowles@student.unimelb.edu.au) or follow me on Twitter: @tilknowles.

*Editors’ Note: Please see also this issue’s profile of Dr Sarah Balkin, University of Melbourne.*

---

<sup>1</sup> This is a decision I made when I was 18 and thought I would be a published speculative fiction author, because in genre fiction a feminine name can impact everything from who reads your books to the design of the cover. I don’t know why I didn’t just use my initials.

<sup>2</sup> The idea for this thesis came about after I witnessed an intense interaction between a listener of the show and one of its hosts after a live podcast recording in 2015.

<sup>3</sup> See Vince Meserko’s 2015 article “The pursuit of authenticity on Marc Maron’s *WTF* podcast”, Melanie Piper’s 2015 article “Little big dog pill explanations: humour, honesty and the comedian podcast”, and Alex Symons’ 2017 article “Podcast comedy and ‘authentic outsiders’: how new media is challenging the owners of industry”.

## Researcher Profile - Dr Sarah Balkin

Dr Sarah Balkin, Lecturer in English and Theatre Studies, University of Melbourne., writes:

I grew up in the US, where I completed my BA at UCLA and my MA and PhD at Rutgers University. In 2013 I moved to Australia, where I am a Lecturer in English and Theatre Studies at the University of Melbourne.

My research spans the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries, with particular strengths in nineteenth and twentieth-century theatre and literature, genre, melodrama and comedy. My monograph, *Spectral Characters: Genre and Materiality on the Modern Stage* ([link](#)), was published by the University of Michigan Press in 2019.

Examining plays, novels, and essays by foundational figures in the history of modern drama—Henrik Ibsen, Oscar Wilde, August Strindberg, Jean Genet, Arthur Kopit and Samuel Beckett—the book proposes an expanded notion of character inclusive of genre histories and material aspects of theatrical production.

My current research on comedy developed partly out of my work on Wilde. The project traces the historical emergence of deadpan performance styles (1830-1930) and their derivations in contemporary queer and feminist comedy. Deadpan performers deliver intentionally comic material as though they are unaware that it is funny, maintaining serious or “normal” tones, expressions and gestures in the face of ridiculous content. This makes deadpan a particularly good style for examining how comedy variously shapes, challenges and reinforces shared cultural norms. The term “deadpan” was first recorded at the height of the silent film era (1927), but I argue that its roots lie in nineteenth-century performance genres ranging from comic lectures to minstrel shows to Wilde’s society comedies. My monograph in progress shows how and why deadpan emerged circa 1830 to 1930 in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. I would welcome AHSN members’ suggestions of pre-cinematic Australian deadpan performers!

Early work from this project is available in a recent book chapter, “Deadpan and Comedy Theory,” in *A Cultural History of Comedy in the Age of Empire* ([link](#)). The chapter examines deadpan’s transatlantic emergence in light of comedy theory, giving particular attention to theories that bracket the nineteenth century: the “incongruity theory” that arose during the eighteenth century and Henri Bergson’s understanding of the comic as “something mechanical encrusted upon the living.” I consider accounts of comic performance styles by actors, comedians, writers, and directors alongside traditional comedy theory.

My research on contemporary comedy considers how queer and feminist performers are deploying derivations of deadpan’s signature gap between subject matter and style, including humourlessness. My first article on this topic, “The Killjoy Comedian: Hannah Gadsby’s *Nanette*,” appears in *Theatre Research International* ([link](#)). In her 2017 show *Nanette*, Gadsby announced that she was quitting comedy. In the show, Gadsby argued that as a marginalized person—a gender-nonconforming lesbian from rural Tasmania—she was doing herself a disservice when she invited audiences to laugh at her trademark self-deprecating humour. Gadsby framed her decision to quit comedy partly as a problem of persona: her practice as a comedian was to take actual, sometimes traumatic, events from her life and turn them into jokes, which she described as ‘half-told stories’. So framed, the problem with Gadsby’s comic persona is the way it both presents and truncates her traumatic experience. When she refuses to be funny, Gadsby casts herself as something like Sara Ahmed’s ‘feminist killjoy’, a spoilsport figure whose unhappiness positions her as a source of tension. In this article I consider how Gadsby’s decision to quit comedy, and the terms in which she articulates that decision in *Nanette*, can help us think about varied modes of humourlessness and comic possibility.

In 2018 I organized the Australasian Modernist Studies Network Conference on “Modernist Comedy and Humour”. In 2021 I am launching a new undergraduate subject on comedy at Melbourne. I look forward to building the university’s capacity for research and teaching in this area.

You can contact me about my research at [sarah.balkin@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:sarah.balkin@unimelb.edu.au). An up to date record of my publications is available at <https://unimelb.academia.edu/SarahBalkin>.



## Member's News – Dr Matt Shores

Matt Shores, University of Sydney, recently had this article published on his research into Japanese performance comedy, rakugo.

**“World Universities!” Pt 5: The University of Sydney, Dr Matt Shores’ ‘Kamigata Rakugo Research Tale’**

*Originally in Japanese, this article appeared on the website Hontondo 0-Yen Daigaku (Japanese version at: <http://hotozero.com/column/world005/>)*



21 May 2020

By **Okada Masaki** (translated by M.W. Shores, [mwshores.com](http://mwshores.com))

Kamigata rakugo is traditional comic storytelling performed in Japan’s Kansai region—the Osaka and Kyoto area. The art is performed for a general audience, funny stories for the cost of a ticket. The first people to make names for themselves performing comic stories were active at the turn of the eighteenth century. They appeared around the same time in Kyoto, Edo (modern Tokyo), and Osaka. The first was in Kyoto, so the history of Japan’s comic storytellers began in Kamigata (modern Kansai). Today if one goes to Kyoto’s Kitano Shrine or Osaka’s Ikutama Shrine, one can find monuments dedicated to Kamigata rakugo’s ‘founders’.

Meanwhile at The University of Sydney in Australia, there is a lecturer called Matt Shores in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Prior to moving to Sydney, he was a lecturer at the University of Cambridge. He is originally from Oregon, USA.

Matt’s research focuses on rakugo, and particularly Kamigata rakugo. At University he has taught units on traditional entertainment and humour, among others. What’s more, he has experience as a rakugo apprentice.

There are not many scholars who specialize in Kamigata rakugo, and one can imagine they are quite rare outside Japan. What could have inspired Matt, born and raised in America, to take interest in Kamigata rakugo and undergo apprenticeship? And what of the research he’s carried out at his positions in England and Australia? Wondering about these things, and considering that Australia was home to someone who played significant role in modern Japan’s rakugo, entertainment, and media, I wanted to reach out. This writer, a rakugo fan himself, recently conducted a remote interview with Matt in Sydney.

Of the many problems that the novel coronavirus has posed, sadly, the world of rakugo has also been affected. The rakugo circuit has seen one cancellation or postponement after the next, and rakugo halls have closed. Hoping I could report something positive about rakugo, Matt answered the call. He is without a doubt a specialist and spoke in Japanese with great enthusiasm—like water flowing down a washboard—about his research and apprenticeship.

*If you would like to contact Matt about his research, and check out his website (above, heading of article) and feel free to email him at: [matthew.shores@sydney.edu.au](mailto:matthew.shores@sydney.edu.au)*

### Encountering Rakugo—Tezukayama University and the Four Greats

“I first attended university in Oregon, at Portland State University. It was there that I met Professor Laurence Kominz, respected scholar of Japanese theatre. From Kominz I learned about kabuki and kyōgen, and we later staged English kabuki productions together.”

Matt learned about kyōgen and kabuki at university, but it turns out that he did not hear of rakugo during this time. Some twenty years ago, around the year 2000, “I guess this had to do with the fact that rakugo wasn’t really looked at as a subject for study.” It was only when Matt studied abroad that he encountered rakugo.

“In order to learn more about Japanese culture, I enrolled in a postgraduate course at Tezukayama University, in Nara. It was there I began my research under Professor Michio Morinaga, a scholar of Japanese performing arts. Actually, with Morinaga-sensei, a major part of my research activities was drinking (laughs). One day he said, ‘I want to introduce you to an interesting man—let’s go to a hot springs resort’. Of course we drank there, too, and he introduced me to a very kind man. I think I must have been told his name, but I didn’t know who he was and didn’t recall after the fact.”

The man Matt’s postgraduate supervisor introduced was none other than one of the ‘Four Greats’ (*shitenmō*) of Kamigata rakugo. He was a master storyteller.

“Sometime after that, Morinaga-sensei invited me to attend a rakugo show in Osaka. So, on 8 September 2002, I saw rakugo for the first time. Morinaga-sensei said, ‘Matt, do you remember who that man is? That storyteller is the man you met at the hot springs resort’. It was Katsura Bunshi V.”



Matt Shores performing rakugo

Rakugo was extremely popular in the Kansai area in the Meiji and Taishō periods (1868-1926), but, due to popular performers dying, and the art being overshadowed by modern manzai—Japan’s two-person stand-up comedy—there were only a few rakugo artists left after World War II.

Katsura Bunshi V, along with Katsura Beichō III, Shōfukutei Shokaku VI, and Katsura Harudanji III, helped revitalise Kamigata rakugo. These are the men who came to be known as the art’s Four Greats.

“The audience hardly stopped laughing. It was one great line after the next. The only problem was that I, who had studied Japanese for five or six years, could understand next to nothing of what master Bunshi was saying. Rakugo consists of three parts—prologue, story proper, and punchline. I could get the opening greeting and pleasantries, but that was it. It was quite frustrating. So, I told myself, ‘I’ve got to learn about this art.’ And that was when I decided to study rakugo.”



Matt in his office at The University of Sydney

### Rakugo Apprenticeship—Two Masters

When Matt began his research, he also became an observing apprentice.

“It was arranged for me to be master Bunshi’s observing apprentice (*minarai deshi*). He gave me the stage name ‘Mosquito-Repellent Incense Mat’ (*Katori senkō matto*), a play on my name of course. I was with Bunshi V from 2002 to 2004, right at the end of his life. I wasn’t a live-in apprentice (*uchi deshi*), but he would call when he had something for me to do. I would go assist in his dressing rooms at shows, go on trips with him. One day he called:

*Hey Matt, can you come out to Osaka?  
Yes master, I’m on my way!  
Um, no, not now... I meant this weekend.*

He was a warm, kind master.”

Matt later lived in Japan from 2010 to 2012 to undergo an apprenticeship with Hayashiya Somemaru IV. Master Somemaru has written a book on rakugo music (*yosebayashi*) and is known for being a scholar-storyteller.



With Katsura Bunshi V (at a Tokyo Bunshi Fan Club event, circa 2003)

“I went to master Somemaru’s house every morning. I did the shopping,

cooking, cleaning, cared for his kimono, and was his driver. I hoped to be named after him something like Mattmaru, but he instead named me 'Front Door Mat' (*Genkan matto*), another pun on my name. At the time he quipped:

*You're Front Door Mat for now, and if you do well, you'll become Toilet Mat.*

*Master, why is that?*

*Well, the toilet is just upstairs from my front door isn't it? You'd be moving up in the world!*

Matt had the opportunity to learn rakugo stories from master Somemaru. When I asked Matt what his best stories are, he responded with the following.

"Rakugo artists learn stories from their masters and they aren't allowed to perform them in public without permission. In my case, I've received permission to perform just one story. Any rakugo I do aside from this, I'm doing on my own for educational purposes.

"I can't really say that I'm good at any particular story," Matt says with clear respect for the rakugo world. The one story he did receive permission to perform was 'Sake Lees' (*Sake no kasu*).

"I was once asked to perform for international students at The University of Tokyo. My first rakugo job." I asked master Somemaru about it and he suggested 'Sake Lees'. It's a short, ridiculous story about a young man who gets drunk from eating *sake* lees. One day when master Somemaru was giving me a lesson, he said, 'Let me hear it in English.' So, with eyes closed, he listened to my English version. When I was done, he looked at me for a moment then said, 'I guess you're pretty good at English after all.' (laughs)

"In 'Sake Lees', the protagonist's name is Kiroku. Master Somemaru didn't think that Kiroku sounded right in the English version, so he suggested that I change it to 'Kiki'. It sounded a bit like a budgie's name to me, but I performed it just the way he told me."

### Life as a Kamigata Rakugo Scholar

Looking back on his time as a rakugo apprentice, Matt speaks as if he was 'half apprentice, half researcher'. Considering that he was exposed to his masters' arts so intimately, it must have been hard for him to look at other artists' rakugo without some degree of prejudice. He did, after all, enter a world structured by strict hierarchy, and he served two apprenticeships. Surely it must be difficult for him to look at rakugo and its artists from a distance.

"I think was able to be objective in my work because I read books and did my 'homework' before apprenticing. I was also aware of my role as somebody who would introduce and spread knowledge about rakugo in other countries and academia."

His research moved forward with the help of books and apprenticeships, but it there were still a limited number of academic studies on rakugo, and it appears as though subjects were not always treated evenly.

"There was English monograph on rakugo published in 1990.<sup>1</sup> But it wasn't really about the rakugo my masters did. This is because it was written with Tokyo rakugo in mind."

There are numerous differences between Tokyo rakugo and Kamigata rakugo. These include stage properties, performance styles, and the way in which the class system is treated. Matt expounded on Kamigata rakugo's 'flamboyance'.

"Compared to the Tokyo tradition, Kamigata rakugo is more flamboyant and cheerful. There is also far more music incorporated into stories. Kimono are different too—in Tokyo they prefer more subdued colors while



With Hayashiya Somemaru IV (left) and his eighth pupil, Hayashiya Someza (at the Wahha Kamigata Lesson Room, circa 2011)

Kamigata rakugo kimono seem to have a wider range of colors, including purples and pinks. Even the way artists enter is different. There's something about the way a Kamigata artist prances onto stage. It just brightens the room."

Edo-Tokyo rakugo developed largely indoors during its history while Kamigata rakugo was performed outdoors for a large part of its history. Some say that it is this that led to Kamigata rakugo becoming a more flashy art, one that could easily appeal to any passerby. As it turns out, most rakugo research treats the Tokyo tradition, so Matt's work on Kamigata rakugo serves as a corrective.

"I became interested in Kamigata rakugo for its use of music and incorporation of other performing arts. I'm also curious about merchant stories. One case in point is the story 'Octopus Kabuki' (*Tako shibai*). Set in the home of a well-to-do merchant, everybody from the master down to his shop boys are obsessed with kabuki. Whatever they do, even when cleaning, they end up doing scenes from their favorite plays. Even the octopus they buy from the fishmonger strikes its own kabuki poses!

"I think a key difference between the two traditions is that Kamigata rakugo is merchant-centered. But the interesting thing about the merchants and their house employees in Kamigata stories is that they aren't depicted as 'upstanding'—they tend not to be hardworking, spendthrift, and they don't steer clear of so-called 'bad places'. Rather, they're irresponsible, weak to temptation, and they're constantly running off to the pleasure quarters and theatre districts. I'll soon be publishing a book about Kamigata rakugo's humour and satire, much of which derives from the contradictions between the general image of real merchants and those in rakugo."

#### Australia's Curious Connection to Rakugo

Here, hoping my own love for rakugo might be indulged, I showed Matt something from my collection during our remote interview: an old Japanese record album.

"Wow, is that an original?" What I showed him was one of Japan's very first records, this one produced in 1903 by Great Britain-based Fred Gaisberg, who had traveled to Japan. As the photo above shows, the record features rakugo artist Yanagiya Kosan III, who also happened to receive mention in Natsume Sōseki's famous novel *Sanshirō*. I didn't want to ask Matt about this record per se, but I did want to talk about the man who introduced Gaisberg to a number of Japanese entertainers, and interpreted for him in order to make the record possible.



"You mean Henry Black. Yes, he was born in Australia in 1858 and came to Japan in 1865 after his father, who was a newspaper reporter/editor in Yokohama. Henry took the stage name Kairakutei Burakku in 1891 and became a well-known rakugo artist."

The Australian Kairakutei Burakku arrived in Japan in the Meiji period and became an entertainer. He also assisted with a recording session that would make history. Is it too much of a stretch to say that the Australia that Matt now calls home is tied to the dawn of modern rakugo? On this note, I asked if Kairakutei Burakku is widely known in Australia.

"As it turns out, I recently attended an English rakugo performance in Sydney, by Kanariya Eiraku. Eiraku showed the audience a photo of Burakku and asked if they knew who he was. Almost nobody did.<sup>3</sup> They were surprised to hear that somebody like this had come from Australia."

It appears as though rakugo itself is not well known in Australia—or the UK or US—either.

"I'm sure most Japanologists have heard of rakugo. And more students have become interested in rakugo thanks to the manga *Shōwa Genroku rakugo shinjū* (*Descending Stories*). But, unless one has attended English rakugo events that aim to foster education and cultural exchange, I doubt most people know what the art is. Unfortunately, for most, it's still Japanese cars and electronics that come to mind when they think of Japan."

Rakugo is occasionally introduced to Western countries through diplomacy and social education programs. But, because the art is an oral tradition and stories are typically set in the Edo period (1600-1868) to the early twentieth century, one might think rakugo would be a tough sell outside Japan.

“Katsura Shijaku, the ‘King of Laughs’, was known for his English rakugo, and his example serves as one approach. But if one ends with, ‘And yes, we have this art in Japan’, it’s difficult to give people a sense of rakugo’s allure. I encourage rakugo artists performing in English to strive to become English rakugo *masters*. Master Shijaku wasn’t a native speaker of English, but he could capture audiences and his timing was impeccable. His art was at the level of mastery to the point that one simply forgot he was performing in a foreign language.”

On the other hand, the visual aspects of rakugo are important, too.

“Stories with a good deal of physical action, such as ‘Zoo’ (*Dōbutsuen*) and ‘Butt Mochi’ (*Shiri mochi*), are popular outside Japan. When there are a lot of comical gestures, rakugo tends to be a hit even if it’s performed in Japanese, or with titles. I think it is just fine, but I’d still like artists to challenge themselves by performing in English more complex stories that have music and other interesting elements.”

Matt says he wishes to do more as a scholar and educator to get the word out about rakugo. I could sense a strong will in his words.

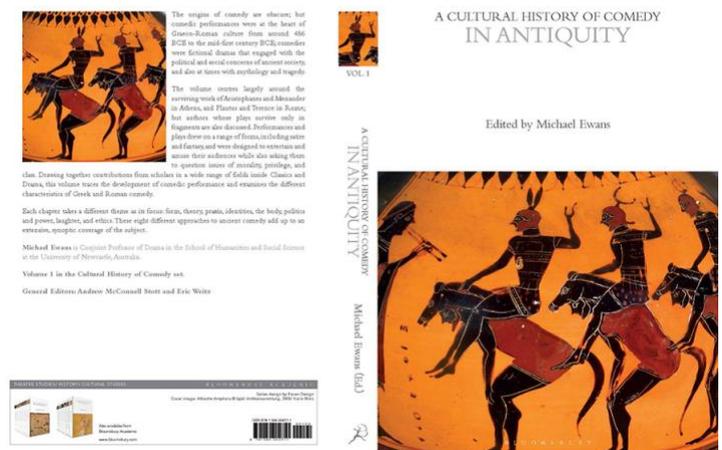
“Even now, in Western academia, rakugo isn’t properly recognized as a subject of study. When lecturing about Japan, people are quick to reference the ‘classics’, such as ‘Collection of Ancient and Modern Poems’ (*Kokin wakashū*) and ‘Tales of Genji’ (*Genji monogatari*). And some of these same people ask, ‘Well, is rakugo a performing art? Is it literature?’ As far as Western scholarship has been concerned, rakugo falls too far outside these parameters. To make matters worse, rakugo content can occasionally be ‘frivolous’ or ‘vulgar’. For me, however, rakugo remains important. And if I hadn’t met Morinaga-sensei, master Bunshi, or master Somemaru, I wouldn’t be where I am today. I’ll continue researching rakugo. After all, I feel as though it’s my mission to help develop research, invite collaboration with artists, and spread rakugo around the world.”

## A Cultural History of Comedy in Antiquity

**A Cultural History of Comedy, 2020.**  
**Andrew McConnell Stott and Eric Weitz,**  
**eds. 6 vols. London:**  
**Bloomsbury/Methuen Academic**

**About the Series and Volume 1, A Cultural History of Comedy in Antiquity**

**Michael Ewans**



The Cultural Histories series by Bloomsbury is one of the most ambitious sets of books ever commissioned by an academic publisher. The latest in the series, *A Cultural History of Comedy* (in six volumes), has just been published in e-format (June 2020) and will be available in hard copy from November 2020. It follows similarly period-divided six-volume Cultural Histories of subjects as diverse as Women, Gardens, Food, Sexuality, The Human Body, Animals, Tragedy and The Senses, with a set Love among others currently in preparation. Each set of six

volumes covers the same chronological periods: Antiquity (500BC-1000AD); The Medieval Age (1000-1400); The Renaissance (1400-1650); The Enlightenment (1650-1800); The Age of Empire (1800-1920); The Modern Age (1920-2000+).

For commissioned editors, these periods are not negotiable, and all volumes in each series must conform to and not exceed the limits of their period. As the publishers' website explains: 'Each volume discusses the same themes in its chapters so that readers may gain a broad understanding of a period by reading an entire volume, or follow a theme through history by reading the relevant chapter in each volume.'

For *A Cultural History of Comedy*, the series editors are Andrew McConnell Stott (SUNY Buffalo) and Eric Weitz (Trinity College Dublin). They claim that theirs is 'the very first truly in-depth history of comic practice, comic form, and comic themes ever produced in English' – and in doing so they seek to distance this series from e.g. the recent *Sage Encyclopedia of Humor Studies* (edited by Salvatore Attardo, 2 vols, 2014). The editors whom they selected for the six volumes are:

**Volume 1:** A Cultural History of Comedy in Antiquity, edited by Michael Ewans

**Volume 2:** A Cultural History of Comedy in the Middle Ages, edited by Martha Bayless

**Volume 3:** A Cultural History of Comedy in the Early Modern Age, edited by Andrew McConnell Stott

**Volume 4:** A Cultural History of Comedy in the Age of Enlightenment, edited by Elizabeth Kraft

**Volume 5:** A Cultural History of Comedy in the Age of Empire, edited by Matthew Kaiser

**Volume 6:** A Cultural History of Comedy in the Modern Age, edited by Louise Peacock

When I accepted the role of editor for vol. 1, *Antiquity*, the first question which confronted me was: what precisely do Bloomsbury Methuen themselves mean by the words 'cultural history', and how does this differ from a straight 'history'? 'Cultural history' has been used in academic circles in recent decades with diverse connotations; so I naturally sought some clarification. The nearest approach to a viewpoint on what Bloomsbury Methuen means by 'cultural histories' appears on the page of their website advertising the volumes: 'The *Cultural Histories* are multi-volume sets offering comprehensive surveys of the social and cultural construction of specific subjects across six historical periods.'

I concluded from this that by 'cultural histories' the publishers probably mean histories which attend properly to the social and cultural context of the subject of each particular set of volumes – in our case Comedy. My own personal interpretation of the title '*A Cultural History of Comedy*' is that we need to place the aspects of the plays which we are discussing within a firm realization of the socio-cultural factors which influenced and shaped those aspects, and if possible by these means to help readers to understand why comedy adopted the forms and styles which it did in our assigned period, explaining why the phenomenon studied in each volume to the series manifested itself in certain specific, sometimes unique ways in the period discussed. This interpretation was accepted by the editors of the *Cultural History of Comedy* series.

All of the earlier sets of *Cultural History* topics have had a unifying set of chapter titles, which are the same in each volume of a particular set (though, for example, the chapter titles which appear in all six books on Women are different from the chapter titles of the six volumes about Gardens). This is to assist a reader who wishes to make comparisons of information about a specific topic, examining two or more of the six periods.

So the editors for the *Cultural History of Comedy* chose what they hoped will be through-themes from Aristophanes' fragmentary predecessors to the present, and they required that each volume editor should commission eight chapters (apart from his or her Introduction), each with a specific title and subject-matter. Their choices for these chapters are interesting, not to say challenging:

**1. Form; 2. Theory; 3. Praxis; 4. Identities; 5. The Body; 6. Politics and Power; 7. Laughter; and 8. Ethics.**

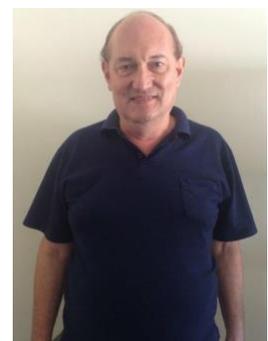
Each of these chapters had to cover manifestations of comedy over the whole of the volume's period. This meant that each contributor to vol. 1, *Antiquity*, had to cover from the perspective of his or her own chapter comedy over the whole period from 500 BC to 1000 AD. Thankfully, although there are many, mostly very short surviving fragments of Greek comedies by other authors, our corpus essentially comprises the extant 11 Old Comedy plays of Aristophanes and the fragments of the New Comedy dramatist Menander – which consist of one short comedy (*Dyskolos*) preserved complete, substantial fragments of 7 others, and smaller fragments of a few more. So there are surviving Greek comedies from mid-C5 to early C3 BCE. As for Latin, although the last preserved comedy is a strange Roman text from the fifth century AD, the anonymous *Querolus*, all the other surviving complete Roman comedies date from the mid to late Republican period – and are the work of only two playwrights, Plautus and Terence (20 and 6 extant plays respectively), covering less than two centuries. They are also the only examples of one of the two forms which Roman comedy took during this period – the *comoedia palliata*, set in Greece as opposed to Rome, and with scripts that were usually based on Greek New Comedies, very freely adapted into Latin.

So the facts of transmission and loss narrow down the effective range of the volume I edited from 14 centuries to 6, and to 44 plays. At least our chapters needed to cover only two, related ancient cultures. I did not envy the contributors to subsequent volumes in the *Cultural History of Comedy*, because as and after connections began to be formed between countries in Europe in the medieval and subsequent periods, and then globally during the Age of Empire and the Modern Age, the authors needed both to select the national styles of comedy which they wish to write about, and to be alert to the interconnections which were fused between them.

Some of the chapter titles are easier to interpret with reference to our *Antiquity* period than others; for example under *Praxis* I had the fairly straightforward task of focusing on the evidence for the actual performance conditions of the comedies and their socio-cultural context, the ways in which the surviving scripts were performed, and the implications of that performance style for their reception by an audience. *Form, Theory and Politics and Power* were equally straightforward as titles for chapters on Greek and Roman comedy. *Identities, Laughter, The Body and Ethics* posed more initial difficulty – mainly due to the generality of these titles and the skimpy nature of the evidence for comedic practice in the ancient world. After some searching, I ended up with the following contributors:

1. Form - *Gesine Manuwald*
2. Theory - *Caleb M. X. Dance*
3. Praxis - *Michael Ewans*
4. Identities - *Natalia Tsoumpra*
5. The Body - *Louise Peacock*
6. Politics and Power - *Isabel Ruffell*
7. Laughter - *Marcel Lysgaard Lech*
8. Ethics - Ethics in Greek Comedy - *Valeria Cinaglia*  
Ethics in Roman Comedy - *Serena S. Witzke*

All of these prospective authors have qualified by their past work to write on the particular area of the chapter to which they have been assigned; in the case of the three well established contributors (Prof. Manuwald, Prof. Ruffell and myself) by several relevant books and journal articles. For examples of the younger scholars I should like to mention Dr Tsoumpra (chapter 4, *Identities*), whose Oxford DPhil thesis on Aristophanes was regarded by her examiners as outstanding, and who has a promising list of subsequent publications, and Dr Cinaglia, the author of part one of chapter 8, who has published a pioneering comparative book *Aristotle and Menander on the Ethics of Understanding*. A/Prof. Peacock (*The Body*) is also particularly interesting because her background is in dance; she has published on clown performance and is interested in *commedia dell'arte*; her current teaching is on comedic acting, and she has researched



Conjoint Professor  
Michael Ewans FAHA,  
University of  
Newcastle

the theatre practice of Greek and Roman actors as far as the evidence allows. So my contributors are as varied as the different subject matter of the chapters demanded.

I hope AHSN members will read, enjoy and learn from the *Cultural History of Comedy* – especially the *Antiquity* volume!

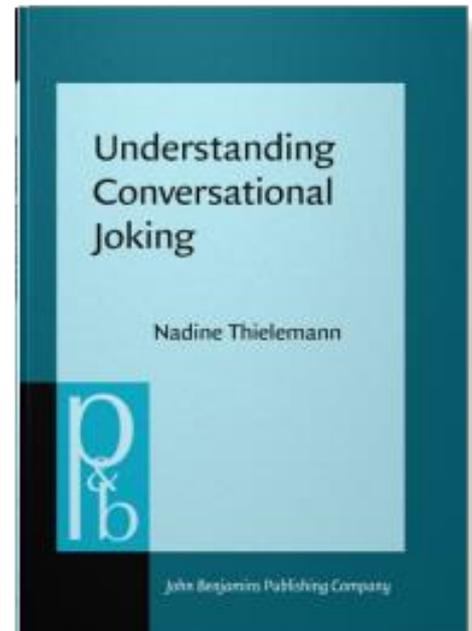
---

## Understanding Conversational Joking

Nadine Thielemann. 2020. *Understanding Conversational Joking: A cognitive-pragmatic study based on Russian interactions*. Pragmatics & Beyond New Series, No. 310. London and Amsterdam: John Benjamins. x, 287 pp.

### [Publisher's description](#)

This book examines the diverse forms of conversational humor with the help of examples drawn from casual interactions among Russian speakers. It argues that neither an exclusively discourse-analytic perspective on the phenomenon nor an exclusively cognitive one can adequately account for conversational joking. Instead, the work advocates reconciling these two perspectives in order to describe such humor as a form of cognitive and communicative creativity, by means of which interlocutors convey additional meanings and imply further interpretive frames.



Accordingly, in order to analyze cognition in interaction, it introduces a discourse-semantic framework which complements mental spaces and blending theory with ideas from discourse analysis. On the one hand, this enables both the emergent and interactive character and the surface features of conversational joking to be addressed. On the other, it incorporates into the analysis those normally backgrounded cognitive processes responsible for the additional meanings emerging from, and communicated by jocular utterances.

<https://benjamins.com/catalog/pbns.310>

### Contents

List of figures	vii–viii
Transcription conventions	ix–x
Chapter 1. Introduction	1–11
Chapter 2. Conversational joking from a discourse-analytic perspective	13–103
Chapter 3. Humor as a cognitive phenomenon	105–184
Chapter 4. Conversational humor from a discourse-semantic perspective	185–258
Chapter 5. Conclusion	259–261
References	263–282
Appendix	283
Index	285–289

## **New book on Humour and the Holocaust**

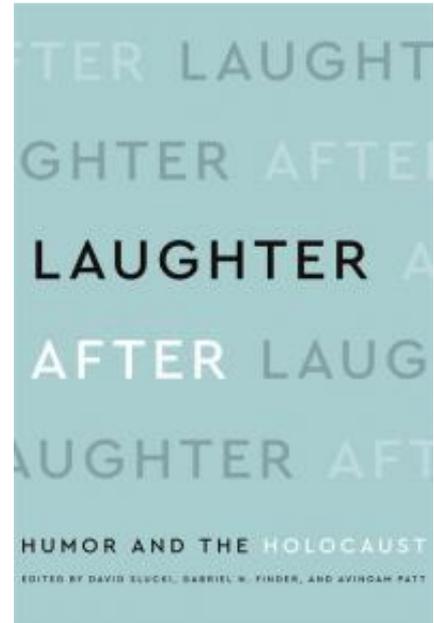
**Laughter After: Humor and the Holocaust.** Edited by David Slucki, Gabriel N. Finder and Avinoam Patt. Detroit MI: Wayne State University Press, 2020.  
[9780814347386](#)

[Publisher's Description](#)

Laughter After: Humor and the Holocaust argues that humour performs political, cultural, and social functions in the wake of horror. Co-editors David Slucki, Gabriel N. Finder, and Avinoam Patt have assembled an impressive list of contributors who examine what is at stake in deploying humour in representing the Holocaust. Namely, what are the boundaries? Clearly, there have been comedy and laughter in the decades since. However, the extent to which humour can be ethically deployed in representing and discussing the Holocaust is not as clear. This book comes at an important moment in the trajectory of Holocaust memory.

As the generation of survivors continues to dwindle, there is great concern among scholars and community leaders about how memories and lessons of the Holocaust will be passed to future generations. Without survivors to tell their stories, to serve as constant reminders of what they experienced, how will future generations understand and relate to the Shoah?

This book seeks to uncover how and why such humour is deployed, and what the factors are that shape its production and reception. Laughter After will appeal to a number of audiences – from students and scholars of Jewish and Holocaust studies to academics and general readers with an interest in media and performance studies.



---

## **Update on ISHS Conference 2020-21**

[Message from the University of Bologna Residence Centre Management at Bertinoro](#)

Dear ISHS 2021 Delegates,

First of all, I hope this message finds you and your loved ones in good health.

We remind you that the dates of ISHS 2021 are: **21st –25<sup>th</sup> June 2021.**

We hope you are still interested in coming.

News and information will available at the web site: <https://eventi.unibo.it/ishs-2020>

Wishing you a happy summer

Best Regards

Monica

**Monica Michelacci**

Ce.U.B. Soc Cons a r.l.

Via Frangipane 6

47032 Bertinoro FC

Tel. 0543 446555

[mmichelacci@ceub.it](mailto:mmichelacci@ceub.it)

[www.ceub.it](http://www.ceub.it)

---

# Call for Papers – The Sacred and The...Profanity

An Online Symposium

8<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Building on the recent growth of scholarship in the field of humour and religion, this interdisciplinary online symposium aims to bring together scholars from a wide range of fields to explore the multifaceted relationship between humour, obscenity, and religion, and to consider what happens when these worlds collide.

There are many examples that seem to support the view that religion and humour have a tense relationship; whether it be 'comic' representations of religious figures in the media, jokes about God, or films and television which focus on religion and morality that are considered blasphemous or offensive. These occurrences are often enthusiastically cast as a conflict between religious freedom and the right to dignity in belief, on the one hand, and freedom of expression and the right to offend, on the other. However, the intersection of humour, obscenity, and religion is much more complex than this, and this symposium invites participants to work through various aspects of this relationship. Of particular interest is the place of humour and the obscene *in* religion, the positive functions it can serve and ultimately its value. We want to ask: what role can humour play in the sphere of religion, and how comfortably? Even if joking might be allowed, can it ever truly fit in? Who decides on the value of humour for religion?

We welcome submissions which consider these, and other, questions in relation to a number of topics including, but not limited to:

- Historical or contemporary examples of humour or obscenity in religion
- Gendered experiences of laughter, humour, and joke-telling
- Ritual
- Joke-telling
- Satire
- The Media
- Blasphemy
- The usefulness of humour and the obscene
- Limits of humour
- The policing of humour

We welcome papers that address one of these themes in a 15-minute talk. All papers will be presented remotely and observed online. Each talk will be followed by a discussion. To submit a proposal, please send an abstract of approximately 200 words to Dr Paul Martin: [paul.s.martin@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:paul.s.martin@bristol.ac.uk) and Nicole Graham: [ng338@kent.ac.uk](mailto:ng338@kent.ac.uk) by **15<sup>th</sup> July 2020**. The organisers will review all submissions anonymously.

In addition to the panel of papers, the symposium will include a roundtable entitled: "Exploring Religion and Ritual in Humour and the Obscene". Confirmed speakers for this roundtable are: Professor Bernard Schweizer (Co-Founder of the Humour and Religion Network), Dr Emily Selove (Senior Lecturer of Medieval Arabic Language and Literature), Dr Lieke Stelling (Assistant Professor in English Literature), and Dr Simon Weaver (Senior Lecturer in Media and Communications).

## Call for Papers - Laughter / Le rire

Abstracts due **July 1, 2020**. Final papers due **October 1, 2020**

Note: For delayed submissions, please contact Lauren Bosc, Managing Editor, E: [L.bosc@uwinnipeg.ca](mailto:L.bosc@uwinnipeg.ca)

Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures invites abstracts in English or French on all matters pertaining to laughter in relation to young people's texts and cultures for a special issue that will be published in Summer 2021.

While the very idea of laughter may appear inappropriate during a pandemic, the high number of internet memes devoted to laughing at it indicates that it has proved to be therapeutic for many. No matter how difficult the times, laughter is something many people do from their earliest days and across their entire lifetimes, and while it may at first glance appear to be merely an innocent expression of amusement, it is actually a far more complex articulation. A laugh can be sudden, ambiguous, unexpected, or even sinister. It can be an involuntary burst of emotion, or it may be strategic, derisive and dismissive. When shared, laughter can foster community and at the same time distinguish between those who belong and those who do not since a laugh out of place can be perceived as a failure to interpret cultural codes. Comedic conventions can shift over time and are in large part culturally determined, but the laugh itself is a remarkably universal form of expression despite its many forms and diverse contexts. At once a ubiquitous nonverbal vocalization expressing joy or mirth (Bryant et. al. 1516) and a "multifaceted social signal" that can surpass social bonding to "also serve as a social rejection cue" (Ethofer 353), laughter has posed a significant challenge to researchers in the sciences, social sciences, and the humanities.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, as Bakhtin notes in his introduction to *Rabelais and his World*, "[l]aughter and its forms represent [...] the least scrutinized sphere of the people's creation" (4). Notwithstanding a large body of research and philosophy on laughter, there is still so much we do not know about it. Its importance is nevertheless underlined by the human tendency to create laughter in response to the world, and to evoke and inspire it across numerous forms and genres as well as in everyday cultural practice. It is doubtless an integral register in entertainment, which, as Richard Dyer points out, "offers the image of 'something better' to escape into, or something we want deeply that our day-to-day lives don't provide. Alternatives, hopes, wishes—these are the stuff of utopia, the sense that things could be better, that something other than what is can be imagined and maybe realized." (20)

There is no doubt that laughter plays an important role in young people's texts and cultures, and one that differs considerably from the role it plays among adults, although appeals to a dual audience mean that both adults and children can enjoy a laugh or two in response to children's media (Butler 40). In picture books, an unruly gross-out toilet-humor aesthetic can provoke riotous laughter in children, whose tastes and limited knowledge invite unique engagements with the bawdy. One could argue that the bawdy tends to draw a different kind of laughter from children than adults, making research on children's laughter an important and necessary supplement to research on humour and comedy in children's literature.<sup>2</sup> This focus may be especially important for children in early childhood education, since, as Laura Tallant points out, researchers have tended to privilege the role that humour plays among school-aged children (252). Significantly, laughter can also function as an interactional resource. Understanding how it does so among young people is, however, not well understood, since extant research disproportionately focuses on adults. In his own attempt to redress this gap, Gareth Walker argues that it is as important for children "to figure out how to use laughter [...] in a reflexively accountable way" as it is for adults (20).

The darker side of laughter emerges in young people's texts and cultures as well, notably in the context of

bullying where it functions as a means of articulating power and control. Representations of laughter do not always function as “feel good” forms of escapism, but rather, can be triggering for young readers who often find themselves at the receiving end of hostile laughter. Testifying to the psychic effects of malicious laughter, the fear of laughter—called “gelatophobia”—is an object of study in psychiatric research.<sup>3</sup> Laughing, or being the one laughed *at*, can determine social position among children the same way it does among adults. The social function of laughter remains a key site of critical inquiry for researchers who study youth culture, indicating that social-science research is as important as literary or cultural studies research in making sense of laughter as a complex, multivalent, dynamic and powerful expression among young people.<sup>4</sup>

In an attempt to redress some of the gaps in research on laughter in studies of young people’s texts and cultures, we invite articles that offer critical engagements with laughter for a special issue on the topic. Social scientific engagements as well as those using an historical studies, literary studies, theatre studies, media studies, or cultural studies approach are welcome.

Topics may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Laughter and community: inclusion and isolation
- Satire/parody in children’s media; dual audiences
- Bodily, bawdy and carnivalesque humour
- Derisive laughter; cruel laughter; mockery; gelatophobia
- Laughter as a social reward, social soother, and/or social enforcer
- Laughter as expression; laughter and affect
- Laughter across cultures
- Laughter and sex/gender; sexual orientation; queer texts, identities, and cultures
- Sublimation, laughter/tears and awkward laughter
- Comedy, Slapstick, Horror: laughter and genre
- Catharsis and annihilation
- Laughter as interactional resource
- Laughter as contagious
- Laughter and optimism/pessimism
- Clowns and Laughter
- Funny Kid Memes and the Adult Gaze
- Comics and the “Funnies”
- Laughter in story, film, TV, video games, vlogs, and other media designed for or created and/or consumed by young people

## Timeline

- Abstracts, written either in English or French, are due **July 1, 2020**  
*Note: For delayed submissions, please contact Lauren Bosc, Managing Editor, E: [L.bosc@uwinnipeg.ca](mailto:L.bosc@uwinnipeg.ca)*
- Short-listed papers will be notified on or around **July 15, 2020**
- Final papers due **October 1, 2020**
- Peer-review: October 2020-January 2021
- Revisions: January-April 2021
- Publication: Summer 2021

All articles will be double-blind peer-reviewed and may be written in English or French. They should be approximately 7000 words long.

## Inquiries

- Lauren Bosc, Managing Editor: l.bosc@uwinnipeg.ca

**Further information about submission guidelines is available at:**

[http://jeunessejournal.ca/index.php/yptc/about/submissions - onlineSubmissions](http://jeunessejournal.ca/index.php/yptc/about/submissions-onlineSubmissions)

## Notes

[1] Adrienne Wood and Paula Niedenthal go further to argue that “laughter can function as a social *reward* that reinforces the behaviour of the recipient as a social soother that conveys nonthreat and *affiliation*, and as a social enforcer that asserts *dominance* or superiority” (2).

[2] In a study of uses of scatological humour in children’s picture books, John McKenzie points out that “the bawdy is part of the underground world of children” (82).

[3] See, for example, Ilona Papousek et al.’s study, which indicates that “the fear of other person’s laughter is associated with a functional configuration of the brain that leaves affected people less protected against social signals of anger and aggression” (66).

[4] See Hackley et al.’s study of how laughter functions socially among young people in the UK.

## Works Cited

- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and his World*. 1965. Trans. Hélène Iswolsky. Indiana University Press, 1984.
- Bryant, Gregory, et al. “The Perception of Spontaneous and Volitional Laughter across 21 Societies.” *Psychological Science*, vol. 29, no. 9, 2018, pp. 1515-25.
- Butler, Francelia. “Children’s Literature: The Bad Seed.” *Signposts to Criticism of Children’s Literature*, edited by Robert Bator, American Library Association, 1983, pp. 37-49.
- Dyer, Richard. *Only Entertainment*. Routledge, 2002.
- Ethofer, Thomas, et al. “Are You Laughing at Me? Neural Correlates of Social Intent Attribution to Auditory and Visual Laughter.” *Hum Brain Mapp*, vol. 41, 2020, pp. 353-61.
- Hackley, Chris, et al. “Young Adults and ‘Binge’ Drinking: A Bakhtinian Analysis.” *Journal of Marketing Management*, vol. 29, no. 7-8, 2013, pp. 933-49.
- McKenzie. “Bums, Poos and Wees: Carnavalesque Spaces in the Picture Books of Early Childhood. Or, Has Literature Gone to the Dogs?” *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2005, pp. 81-94.
- Papousek, Ilona, et al. “The Fear of Other Person’s Laughter: Poor Neuronal Protection against Social Signals of Anger and Aggression.” *Psychiatry Research*, vol. 235, 2016, pp. 61-8.
- Tallant, Laura. “Framing Young Children’s Humour and Practitioner Responses to it Using a Bakhtinian Carnavalesque Lens.” *International Journal of Early Childhood*, vol. 47, no. 2, 2015, pp. 251-66.
- Walker, Gareth. “Young Children’s Use of Laughter as a Means of Responding to Questions.” *Journal of Pragmatics*, vol. 112, 2017, pp. 20-32.
- Wood, Adrienne, and Paula Niedenthal. “Developing a Social Functional Account of Laughter.” *Personal Psychology*, vol. 12, 2018, pp. 1-14.
-

## **Special (Covid-madness related) issue**

Journal of Imaginary Research Special Issue

<https://journalofimaginaryresearchhome.files.wordpress.com/2020/05/joir-special-issue-1-may-2020-1.pdf>

Includes titles like:

When lap(top)s are not for sleeping: feline ethnography in a research space

The impact of day loss discombobulation on the number of shits given

Replacing 'staircase grading' with 'time-of-day assessment'

Man-looking as (in)ability: a study of how men 'look but cannot find' items in domestic setting

*Spotted by the Chair of the AHSN Board, who invites us all to enjoy and share widely!*

---

### **The Humour Studies Digest**

### **The Australasian Humour Studies Network (AHSN)**

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

Send your Digest Submissions to our Co-Editors

Michael at [Michael.meany@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:Michael.meany@newcastle.edu.au) or Jessica at [Jessica.davis@sydney.edu.au](mailto:Jessica.davis@sydney.edu.au)

To Subscribe or unsubscribe, visit the AHSN Web site at <https://ahsn.org.au>