

ISHS 2022 CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS

Key Note Speakers

Salvatore Attardo – Texas A&M University- Commerce, TX, USA

Context, the ghost of Goffman, and humor. How can we tell when we are joking?

In this paper I will discuss three related concepts: the widely used idea of humorous frame (in the Goffmanian sense), the idea of context (broadly construed, see Tsakona 2020; Attardo 2020), and the mechanisms that allow us to determine which frame is currently active, i.e., “is this humor?”. I will start out by pointing out that most treatments of the idea of humorous frame are vague, at best. For example, laughter does not co-occur exclusively with humor and yet the presence of humor is assumed to “mark” or “signal” or “acknowledge” humor (e.g., Coates, 2007). The correct question should be, what is the difference between laughter that accompanies humor and laughter that does not? I will then differentiate between “framing,” “keying,” “footing,” and “bracketing” all concepts used by Goffman in relation to humor and used more or less interchangeably in the literature. Finally, I will argue that the metaphor of “negotiating” the humorous frame should be replaced, at least in some instances, with the concept of “soft assembly” which fits better the facts, because it does not assume that interactants deliberately communicate nor that they reach an agreement.

Conal Condren – University of New South Wales, Australia

Academic Myth and the Political Origins of a Concept.

The lineage of humour theory from Plato to Kant is familiar. My argument however, is that this is a genealogical myth, a creature of academic politics, advertising and legitimating a new field of university study and its concerns. Such promotional pedigrees are common in academia. In this case, there is a specific mechanism: the treatment of laughter as an expression of humour. This allows a prestigious pedigree to reinforce the commonly asserted nostrum that humour is a universal.

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

Freed from popular humoral theory, the word humour first became an occasional synonym for jest in the mid-seventeenth century; then by the early eighteenth, it is sometimes used as a covering term for a variable range of more specific phenomena, such as jesting, facetiousness, occasionally satire, and often wit. This process was the creation of a rough semantic field that, with augmented content, is now in use. A sense of humour only comes in the nineteenth century, a consequence of an extension of the meaning of sense to mean faculty, so becoming of interest in the emerging discipline of psychology. It is also only from the nineteenth century that humour becomes a loan word in many other languages, sometimes with altered meaning.

Politics may also help explain why the invention of humour, as we now understand it, was a contingent English language phenomenon. Seventeenth-century England was notoriously violent and insecure. The assumed aggression of laughter was seen as part of the problem. Humour, came to sanction certain sorts of laughter as safe, just as there were places in which it might be contained as acceptable.

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

Don Kulick – Hong Kong University, and Uppsala University, Sweden

Under what circumstances can funnily serious behavior be seriously funny?

Love on the Spectrum is an Australian reality series that follows a number of young adults on the autism spectrum, as they search for love and go on dates with others who also are on the spectrum. The show ran for two seasons, in 2019 and 2021, and was recently also made in a US version. The series was generally well-reviewed both by people who themselves are on the spectrum and by neurotypical viewers. Much of the charm of the series is that it evokes laughter, frequently at the seriousness of the people it portrays. My talk will explore how the series invites viewers to find the protagonists' funnily serious behavior seriously funny. I will compare the laughter raised during Love on the Spectrum with laughter encouraged by British comedian Ricky Gervais's 2012-2014 series Derek, which is about a character whom many viewers identified as being on the autism spectrum. I will discuss similarities between Love on the Spectrum and Derek but will conclude by explaining how the two series invite laughter based on very different premises.

Martin Rowson – cartoonist, illustrator and writer

Mocking the Preposterous: The Challenges of Satirising Populism

Visual Satire, as a distinct & precise subset of humour, has always involved the satirist punching up instead of kicking down, in order to better afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted. But how is the satirist to speak truth to power by laughing at it

when the Power – in the guise of “Populism” – expropriates Satire’s weapons of offence to bolster its own power through mocking the “woke” & any minority in sight, claiming to be defending “Free Expression”. In short, when the best way to spot a Nazi is because they keep whining about “Freedom”, can Satire stay true to itself while remaining both offensive & effective? Fully illustrated overview from Hogarth & Gillray, via the Nazis, to Trump, Johnson, Erdogan & the rest of the mob.

Tony Veale – University College Dublin

Computer Says D’Oh! Bridging the Gap Between “Funny Peculiar” and “Funny Ha-Ha”

There are, broadly speaking, two ways of using the word “funny” in English. The first, which relates to situations that puzzle but do not amuse, is “funny peculiar,” as when we find our car keys in the fridge or questionable charges on our phone bill. This is the sense to which Isaac Asimov alludes in his observation that “The most important words in science are not ‘Eureka’ but ‘that’s funny.’” The second relates to the sense of humour, to amusing situations that make us laugh, often because they have been deliberately engineered by others to do precisely that.

It turns out that computers excel at the first sense of “funny,” both at fostering a puzzling sense of the peculiar in their users and at recognizing user behaviours that are statistically out of the ordinary, but stumble rather badly on the second. The fact that we use “funny” to describe these very different kinds of experience suggests that both share a common grounding in the incongruous, but a formal and/or algorithmic means of converting “funny peculiar” into “funny ha-ha” has proven stubbornly elusive to humour theorists and computationalists alike. The gulf between the two is most easily bridged in the case of the pun – the form of humour on which machines have shown the most success to date – since pun-words themselves serve as a shallow bridge between multiple words and senses. But machines still find it acutely difficult to look beyond the pun, to see intention in the peculiarities of others or to imbue their own creations with comical intent. However, just as one person’s funny peculiar is another’s funny ha-ha, machines can mine the large grey area between the two in ways that make their efforts at humour more than accidental if still less than entirely knowing and deliberate. This talk will explore some of the ways in which a machine can leverage its sense of the “funny peculiar” to foster a sense of “funny ha-ha” in human audiences. I will look at

different formal strategies for framing the peculiar as the funny, as in the automated generation of stories, and outline a data-driven, social application of these ideas to show how an imperfect machine sense of humour might achieve useful results at scale while still struggling to tell the amusing from the unusual.

ISHS 2022 Conference Session Abstracts (alphabetical order by first author)

Eyitayo Aloh – Trent University, Ontario, Canada

“Beware the Laughter of Aliens”: Comedy, African immigrants and the negotiation of liminality in Canada.

Historically, humour has always been used by immigrants to cope with some of the challenges that their realities bring. Plato contends that “We shall enjoin that such representations (comedy) be left to slaves or hired aliens, and that they receive no serious consideration whatsoever” (*Laws*, 7: 816e). While Plato meant this as a derogatory remark, it affirms humour has always been in the domain of immigrants.

In Canada, the seemingly friendly immigration policy has seen an increased number of African immigrants come into the country as temporary residents with a view to becoming citizens. The realities often do not match the dream, thus creating a challenging situation for the immigrants. This situation, in turn has meant an adjustment of expectation(s) that often involved the use of humour as a coping mechanism. Humour thus become the currency of choice in negotiating their liminal state – the in-between moment from arriving in Canada as a temporary resident to obtaining permanent residency/citizenship. How is comedy deployed in this situation by African immigrants? What’s its function and benefit to the comics and the community they represent?

Using the “Signifyin” theory by Henry Louis Gates Jr (1988) as framework, I intend to answer the questions in this paper by analysing the stand-up performances of two

immigrant comedians: Fatima Dhowre and Boucar Diouf. I hope to show that while liminality may pose a challenge to African immigrants, humour offers the tool for negotiating and navigating the liminal state until stability is achieved.

Lydia Amir – Tufts University, Boston, MA, USA

The Legacy of Nietzsche's Philosophy of Laughter in France: Deleuze, Bataille, and Rosset

The lecture introduces a book of the same topic (Routledge 202w), which traces the reception of Nietzsche in France as a philosopher of laughter, parody, and play, his influence on philosophies devised in France in his wake, on French philosophy in general, and eventually, on contemporary philosophy as a whole. Whilst the significance of reading Nietzsche as a philosopher of laughter lies in its influence, the interest in this reception lies in that this unobvious reading was mostly restricted to France for decades, before it found its way to the English-speaking Academe. This is all the more unsettling because Nietzsche was convinced that only the French would understand him. Is the French reception of Nietzsche as a philosopher of laughter an indication that he was right? If not, how can it be explained?

Shahin Amiriparian – University of Augsburg,
Germany

Alexander Kathan – University of Augsburg,
Germany

Niklas Müller – University of Passau, Germany

Speech-Based Spontaneous Humor Recognition Utilising
Deep Spectrum and Acoustic Features

Contemporary methods of computerised psychometry promise to provide unique frameworks to deliver unobtrusive, multi-faceted, ad hoc measures of humour that are free from the substantial limitations associated with traditional humour measures. The automatic understanding of humour is essential for a naturalistic human-robot interaction and the humanisation of artificial intelligence (AI). In this work, we introduce AI methods for automatic speech-based recognition of spontaneous humour from the novel Passau Spontaneous Football Coach Humour (Passau-SFCH) dataset that contains roughly 11 hours of multimodal recordings of German football coaches, labelled for the presence of humour. In particular, we first extract two feature sets from the audio recordings in the dataset: (i) deep spectrum features, and (ii) the extended Geneva Minimalistic Acoustic Parameter Set (eGeMAPS). Both approaches have proved valuable in audio-based affective computing tasks. For extraction of the deep spectrum features, pre-trained deep convolutional neural networks have been applied, and for the eGeMAPS, the openSMILE toolkit has been used. Afterwards, we train AI models on both feature sets to detect the presence of humour in each speech segment. We achieve mean Area Under the Curve (AUC) scores of .6547 and .6952 on the unseen test partition of the dataset using deep spectrum and eGeMAPS, respectively, demonstrating the efficacy of the applied methodologies. The unweighted chance level is 0.5000 AUC, i.e., our best AI system shows a relative improvement of 39.0 % (or 19.52 percentage points) compared to an algorithm which predicts by random choices.

Keywords: automatic humor recognition · speech processing · transfer learning · deep spectrum

Lisa Arter – Southern Utah University, Cedar City, UT, USA

Utilizing Humorous Texts and Engaging Pedagogies to Increase Literacy

Humor and wordplay are invaluable instructional tools for encouraging improved literacy and enhanced vocabulary development through engaged and extensive reading. Educational researchers and classroom practitioners alike argue that

vocabulary development which is enjoyable and creative is more effective than rote memorization methodologies. Parents and teachers who understand the developmental stages of humor (based on Paul McGhee's work), are better prepared to utilize humorous literature to encourage and support literacy and vocabulary development. Based on continuing research and my chapter in *Research on Young Children's Humor: Theoretical and Practical Implications for Early Childhood Education* (eds Eleni Loizou and Susan L. Recchia), this presentation will explore a variety of children's picture books and adolescent novels by authors such as Mo Willems, Fred Gwynne, Peggy Parish, and Lemony Snicket, who purposefully seek to use humor and wordplay in their writing. Additionally, this presentation will take a pedagogical approach to the discussion by examining methodologies in which classroom teachers can utilize humorous texts to enhance enjoyment of literacy development for students.

Sara Atwater – Maastricht University / Universität Duisburg-Essen

Examining the Construction of a Gendered Public Sphere through Women's Cabaret in Post-Industrial Germany

Mary Beard, begins her manifesto "Women and Power" with a description of Telemachus, the son of the great hero Odysseus, commanding his mother, Penelope, who is addressing visitors in the great hall to "go back up into your quarters, and take up your own work, the loom and the distaff...speech will be the business of men, all men, and me most of all; for mine is the power in this household." (Homer; Beard, 2017)

Beard goes on to explain that Telemachus uses the Homeric Greek term '*muthos*' which she explains "signals public speech, not the kind of chatting, prattling or gossip that anyone – women included, or especially women – could do." (Beard, 2017)

Several hundred years later, the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas re-defined the term 'Öffentlichkeit' (or 'the public sphere' in English) to signal the arena where free public debate and communication take place, imbuing it with associations from the word 'Publikum' which denoted (and still does) the audience of a play or literary work (Habermas, 1990; Emden and Midgley, 2012)

Of course, also embedded in Habermas' term was a long-held distinction already present in Mary Beard's early example from Greek antiquity – namely that the public sphere was an official, privileged realm in which women's voices, quite literally, should be silenced or had no place. Beard looks closely at historical and contemporary descriptions of the sound of women's speech in seeking an understanding for what she describes as a literal aversion to the female voice in the public sphere. She points out a tendency in the mainstream media to describe female public speakers as “winging and whining.” She asserts that these oft cited terms used to describe women's speech “underpin an idiom that acts to remove the authority, the force, even the humour from what women have to say” and asserts that descriptions like “whinging and whining” trivialize and re-privatise women's speech, pushing it further away from the traditional public discursive domain.

It is more than noteworthy that Beard points out that the vocabulary waged against women's speech even acts to “remove the humour from what women have to say.” Helga Kothoff, much like Beard, points out that historically speaking, women have often been the butt of a joke, rather than the producer. She cites examples of verbal humour – jokes – used in the Federal Parliament of Germany whereby a female Green party candidate, whose public address calling for shorter working hours so husbands could do more housework was met with a male Christian Democrat's one-liner “Do you actually have a husband at home?” (Kotthoff, 2006). The intention of the “witty” interruption, and many others like it apparently, was a way of pointing out the female Parliamentarian's marginal position in the male-dominated group identity of the German Federal Parliament and in German society at large (Burckhard, 1992). Here the trivialization the so-called domestic sphere, men's roles in relation to it and the socially reproductive work women do in the household, re-privatise the female MP's speech and chastises her for bringing the issue of housework into the public domain.

Joanne Gilbert has focused the lens on women's comedy performances which she calls “performances of marginality” to allow for an examination of power and identity issues that continue to keep women largely off the “socio-political stage” (2004). She also calls attention to the role of the audience in “serving as ultimate arbiter of humor and power in public discourse” (15). This, of course, recalls associations of the term ‘Publikum’ which is deeply imbedded in Habermas' concept of the public sphere.

With Gilbert's work in mind, this panel discussion will present Ethnographic and qualitative data in the form of performer and audience interviews related to women's humorous performances of cabaret and recording of live cabaret shows in the German Ruhr Valley which took place during a two year period. Cabaret and its

politically satiric charge is a historically popular form of comedy entertainment in German speaking countries and it has been the focus of a considerable amount of research some of which has focused on the staging of marginalized gendered and ethnic identities (Vierschilling, 1999; Bauschinger, 2000; Boran, 2004; Michele Ricci Bell, 2011). Local Ruhr Valley cabaret troupes or individual performers like the now disbanded female cabaret duo “die Missfits” often distinguish themselves as being from the Ruhr metropole through the language, material and performance features of the show and also employ semiotic tropes to recall the area’s male-dominated industrial past.

This contribution will look at how these performances reproduce or question gender ideologies in a region which is characterized by heavy labour and working-class masculinities (Connell; Donaldson). It will explore how women’s cabaret performances thrust women’s comedic speech and semiotic humour practices into the public arena and with them a number of political concerns which have become central to feminist discourses. Special attention will be paid to the quality of voice, or speech register, used by female performers which calls into question gender generalizations – like those described by Beard – that seek to depict female speakers in the public domain as “whingey and whiney” or “chatty and prattling”.

References

- Bauschinger, S. (2000) *Literarisches und Politisches Kabarett von 1901 bis 1999*. Tübingen: Francke.
- Beard, M. (2017) *Women and Power*. London, UK: Profile Books.
- Boran, E.M. (2004) *Eine Geschichte des Türkisch-Deutschen Theaters und Kabarett*. M.A. Thesis. The Ohio State University.
- Burckhard, A. (1992) ‘Das ist eine Frage des Intellekts, Frau Kollegin! Zur Behandlung von Rednerinnen in deutschen Parlamenten.’, in Gunthner, S. and Kotthoff, H. (eds) *Die Geschlechter im Gespräch. Kommunikation in Institutionen*. Stuttgart: Metzler, pp. 287-311.
- Emden, C. and Midgley, D.R. (2012) *Changing perceptions of the public sphere*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Gilbert, J. (2004) *Performing Marginality: Humor, Gender, and Cultural Critique – Joanne R. Gilbert* – Google Boeken. Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press.
- Habermas, J. (1990) *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*. Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Homer (1919) *The Odyssey*. London: New York: Heinemann; G.P. Putnam’s sons.
- Kotthoff, H. (2006) ‘Gender and humor: The state of the art’, *Journal of Pragmatics*, 38(1), pp. 4–25.

- Michele Ricci Bell (2011) 'Satire and Memory Work In Post -1989 Eastern German Political Cabaret', in Twark, J.E. (ed.) *Strategies of humor in post-unification German literature, film, and other media*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, pp. 102–121.
- Vierschilling, G.E. (1999) *Das deutsche Frauenkabarett seit Beginn der achtziger Jahre. Zwischen postfeministischer Nachlese und satirischer Zeit-kritik*. M.A.Thesis. Universität Siegen.

Sammy Basu – Willamette University, Salem, OR, USA

Whose Laughter is Left? Habermas, Nazism and Humor

Habermas's formal conceptions of the 'public sphere' and 'ideal speech' reflected his admirable efforts to extrapolate on Enlightenment idealism and repudiate Nazi totalitarianism. Taken together they have inspired considerable theorizing about the benign prospects for deliberative democracy. In 1999, I ventured an early critique of Habermas's conceptions in order to make space within public discourse for humor and irony. In research since then I have been identifying and evaluating the didactic and communicative merits of the abundant political humor in multiple media across the ideological spectrum that figured in the public discourse of the Weimar Republic (1919-33). In my remarks I will offer some inspiring instances, as well as cautionary outcomes from the Weimar context, while continuing to affirm, *pace* Habermas, the overall consequentialist value of humor (with limits) circulating amid the many overlapping publics of contemporary democratic society.

Ursula Beermann – UMIT – Private University for Health Sciences, Medical Informatics and Technology, Austria

Humor and Comic Styles, Responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, and Memes

As of the start of the pandemic, memes on COVID-19 emerged quickly. Since then, some research on the role of humor and memes in the pandemic has been conducted. Olah and Ford (2021) found that stress and hopelessness in response to the pandemic were negatively predicted by self-enhancing humor and positively by self-defeating humor. In the current online-study, 243 participants filled in the Humor Styles Questionnaire (Martin et al., 2003), Comic Style Marker (Ruch et al., 2018), questions on the degree of agreement to protective COVID-measures, perceived stress, threat and hopelessness in response to the pandemic (adopted from Olah & Ford, 2021) and rated 30 memes (partly collected by Kuipers & Boukes, in prep.) pre-categorized in 3 main categories (with 2 sub categories each; see Milner-Davies et al., in prep.). Olah and Ford's (2021) results were partly replicated and extended to the comic style fun, which was negatively related to hopelessness. Furthermore, responses to the pandemic predicted funniness of memes, and partly moderated the relationship between humor and comic styles with funniness of memes. For example, perceived economical and health-related threat and hopelessness predicted funniness of memes on the meaningfulness of protective measures. The relationship of social humor with funniness of memes on seeking out social affiliations during the pandemic was moderated by perceived stress in response to the pandemic. The results show that, beyond humor traits, the way the pandemic is experienced serves as a context that may moderates how memes of different categories are perceived.

Luca Bischetti – IUSS Pavia, Italy

Surfing through pandemic waves: Covid-19 humor appreciation during 2020

Studies on Covid-19 humor started to appear during the coronavirus pandemic, shaping a novel strand of research. Here we present two studies aiming at understanding the role and response to pandemic humor.

The first study was conducted during the early phases of the pandemic (March 2020, T1) in Italy [Bischetti et al. 2021 – *Lingua*]. Here, we examined how different forms of humor were perceived (one-liners vs. memes) and the individual factors modulating Covid-19 humor appreciation. Memes were perceived as funnier than one-liners. The use of humor as a coping mechanism has proved useful to boost the appreciation and mitigate the disturbing potential of Covid-19 humor. Results offer novel insights on the appreciation of “more traditional” (i.e., one-liners) versus more contemporary (i.e., memes) humor, highlighting the role of humorous coping strategies.

The first study was conducted in late 2020. Here, we longitudinally tested Covid-19 humor appreciation and studied its therapeutic effects in reducing anxiety. 622 individuals tested at T1 were enrolled in November 2020 (T2). They judged one-liners and memes on either benign (e.g., masks) or gruesome themes (e.g., death), as well as non-Covid-19 topics. Anxiety was measured before and after humor rating. Overall, at T2 people perceived Covid-19 humor as less funny than at T1. Memes were still the funniest type of humor, especially for older adults. Humor exposure generally reduced anxiety, although gruesome humor attenuated this effect. Facing the second pandemic peak, people *laughed* less to Covid-inspired humor, yet could ease their anxiety by adopting a humorous outlook.

Keywords: Covid-19; Individual differences; Coping

Luca Bischetti – IUSS Pavia, Italy

Cracking smiles by different joke types: the zygomaticus major response

We studied the response to jokes using Electromyography (EMG), the recording of facial muscle activity. We aimed at examining the response to different joke types, whose resolution is based, within the framework of the General Theory of Verbal Humor, on different Logical Mechanisms: phonological jokes, based on sound similarity, and mental jokes, involving false mental states attribution. EMG over the zygomaticus major was recorded from 35 participants, who read 124 experimental in two conditions (jokes vs. non-jokes).

Results showed that jokes, compared to non-jokes, triggered an overall stronger EMG activity. Interestingly, the analyses highlighted a different temporal unfolding of EMG responses for the two joke types (each compared with its non-humorous counterparts): in phonological jokes the response of the zygomatic major showed significant changes 400ms earlier than in mental jokes. Moreover, the zygomatic major was activated to a larger extent for phonological jokes than for mental jokes between 1200-2400ms after stimulus onset.

We argue that these results signal a faster and stronger expression of mirth in the case of humorous wordplays, possibly linked to a more conclusive resolution, while in mental jokes where complex inferential mechanisms are required, the EMG response is less immediate. Overall, our results bring more evidence in favor of the psychophysiological correlates of humor, supporting the theoretical distinction between jokes types and indicating that also covert responses might be sensitive to the different Logical Mechanisms involved in joke resolution.

Keywords: Logical Mechanisms, Zygomaticus Major, Electromyography (EMG)

Tiansi Dong – University of Bonn, Germany

Identifying Commonsense Spatial Knowledge via Simulating Spatial Jokes using Blender

Identifying Commonsense Knowledge remains a tough task for the research of AI and ML. Spatial jokes are short texts that amuse people by describing actions that violate commonsense spatial knowledge. We propose to use Blender to learn and analyse commonsense spatial knowledge by simulating uncommon spatial behaviours described by joke texts. At the learning stage, commonsense spatial knowledge are manually retrieved, associated with words in joke texts, and informed to the Blender environment. Spatial jokes guide the constructing process of spatial behaviours in the Blender environment, which violate the commonsense spatial knowledge saved in the learning stage. From a joke about replacing light-bulbs, we learned the commonsense of spatial knowledge of object relative stability, and discuss how this kind of knowledge can be automatically learned from non-joke corpus, and how new spatial jokes can be generated by violating object relative stability.

Danielle Bobker – Concordia University, Canada

Comedy as Love Speech?

Some Western democracies, including Canada where I live, use hate speech laws to criminalize the public circulation of jokes that incite hatred against members of designated vulnerable groups. The superiority theory of humour, which since ancient times has emphasized comedy's capacity to degrade and humiliate, has recently been revamped as the binary distinction between unacceptable jokes that "punch down" (that is, jokes targeting already vulnerable people) and acceptable jokes that "punch up" (that is, jokes that make fun of people with power). It makes sense that the punching up vs punching down distinction has taken hold in the wake of the advent of hate speech laws. Like hate speech, punching down emphasizes that, contrary to the English nursery rhyme, words—even purportedly funny words—may hurt us at least as much as sticks and stones.

This paper will analyze media reports of the recent legal cases involving Quebecois comedian Mike Ward through the lenses of feminist philosophy of humour and alternative models of justice. I will first parse the views of comedy's pleasures and harms that are commonly projected through the punching up vs punching down distinction and free speech vs hate speech debates, then consider what these familiar binaries leave out. I propose that the approaches to justice and accountability developed by and for Black, Indigenous, and disabled communities provide a better vantage for understanding comedy's potential as love speech: that is, as medium for preventing violence by promoting complex, dynamic, mutually respectful relationships and acknowledging and potentially repairing past harms.

Ian Brodie – Cape Breton University, Canada

When is a joke? Insights from contemporary legend scholarship for the study of stand-up comedy repertoire development

In “When is a Legend?” Bill Ellis circumscribes the half-lives of the legend, the different moments in its arc from the teller initial’s impetus to articulate a story-worthy occurrence from “the boundaries of existence” through its first tentative performance to its increasingly polished and aesthetics-informed performances until such time as its novelty as both urgent communication and good story lead to it falling from an active repertoire, remaining as metonym for the group and on occasion recorded in the deracinated, decontextualized, and anaesthetic legend report. The “half-life” of a stand-up comedy bit, I would argue, operates in an analogous way, with attendant qualifiers based on the professional and mediated differences between vernacular and professional humorous verbal art I have articulated elsewhere. Of particular interest is the enforced professional expectation of spontaneity, or the illusion thereof, which maintains the stand-up performance as hovering between the half-lives of translation and finished narrative.

João Paulo Capelotti – Universidade Federal do Paraná, Brazil

Good and bad taste in Brazilian humor case law

The appreciation of the good or bad quality of the humorous expression should not be a concern of the courts (as some of the courts themselves acknowledge). However it is not rare to notice how much matters of taste can influence the judgment of tort law cases in Brazil, when the so called harmful expression was intended to be humorous. A correlation that should not be the rule emerges as one: “good taste” – “lawful humor” vs. “bad taste” – “illegal humor”. Grounded in the seminal work of Kuipers (2006), this paper seeks to demonstrate how this view reflects prejudices and matters of class, considering that most of Brazilian judges are white, male and originally members of the upper casts of society.

Andrea de Carlos Buján – Universitat Abat Oliba CEU, CEU Universities, Barcelona, Spain

Humour in schools: a tool for creating resilient educational environments

Adversity, of different types and levels of severity, is an integral part of every human being's existence. However, we have a powerful – though often overlooked – weapon that can help us face and overcome the obstacles we encounter along the way: sense of humour. The presentation analyzes the strategies for harnessing the potential for resilience that lies in sense of humour in school environments.

Data extracted from interviews with teachers from schools participating in the research project "*Fostering resilience in primary education: innovation and continuous teacher training (ANDREIA)*" (PID2019-111032RB-I00) provide an overview of the main challenges currently faced by learners (low frustration tolerance, lack of effort, individualism and difficulty in interpersonal relationships...) and reveal the need to take into account the importance of developing resilient individuals who are able to cope with life problems they may encounter. Consequently, the need for the school to be a space in which resilience is fostered and developed is reflected.

According to various researchers, sense of humour is one of the pillars of resilience, a mechanism that can help us to distance ourselves from an unfavourable situation and to face it with a more positive attitude. Therefore, it is considered that the auxiliary and cross-cutting use of laughter and humour in schools could foster interpersonal relationships, personal and social skills and the well-being of primary school children. Thus, humour could be used to foster in the classroom a resilient educational environment to address the main educational challenges of today.

Keywords: resilience, Primary education, classroom climate

Guillem Castañar Rubio – Saint Petersburg State University, Russia

Multi-ethnic jokes in the Russian language

The aim of this paper is to study variations and continuities in the targets of multi-ethnic jokes in the Russian language through time in three consecutive periods: Soviet era, post-socialist years and the present time. Multi-ethnic jokes are a subtype of ethnic canned jokes that feature two or more ethnonyms in one text, three being the most usual number of nationalities featured in the text and having, therefore, a tripartite structure. The different nationalities are placed in a special situation that usually entails some kind of competition between them. Our specific goals in this article are: 1) to analyse the position of the nationalities mentioned in the tripartite textual structure of the joke, their function within the text of the joke and their structural variations through time; 2) to determine the ethnic scripts that are frequently ascribed to these targets and their changes from Soviet to present times; 3) to identify the nationalities that appear in multi-ethnic jokes in Russian and to detect changes in this cast of characters, if any, through the three chronological periods. The analysis of a corpus of 359 multi-ethnic jokes in the Russian language reveals these texts undergo few changes through times. Moreover, and although they feature different nationalities, these multi-ethnic jokes are an example of reflexive ethnic humour, since they primarily target Russians.

Keywords: ethnic humour, multi-ethnic jokes, Russia

Rebecca Rose Nocella – University of Reading, UK

Delia Chiaro – University of Bologna, Italy

Laughing in the Face of the Law: Humour as a Thermostat
Activating Social Change for Sex Workers

The use of humour in protests is by no means new, and recently it seems to appear more and more in framing political issues in the contemporary public sphere. Across the political spectrum, behaviour of demonstrators at rallies is comparable to playground practices as they display numerous topsy-turvy features of Bakhtin's carnival. It is common for demonstrators to paint their faces, to wrap themselves in flags, or to be masqueraded in amusing ways. Members of the Italian anti-Fascist Sardine movement dressed up like Sardines in October 2019; the Finnish parody group 'Loldiers of Odin' patrolled the streets in clown costumes alongside official Soldiers of Odin to protect citizens from migrant criminality, and 2021 saw a rioter posing as a Native American during the siege on the Washington Capitol. It should therefore come as no surprise if sex workers, involved in porn, an activity that for many is cause for a snigger, if not outright laughter, should turn to the comedic mode to get a political point across.

We look at the protests of UK porn workers who turned to parody to draw attention to a gendered and discriminatory legislation concerning their work. The Face-Sitting Protest and The Kink Olympixxx exemplify two carnivalesque protests before Westminster that did not drive Parliament to annul the law, but they did elicit newer discussions around numerous issues surrounding online pornography. In other words, via humour, porn workers' thermometer (their unease towards biased legislation) triggered the thermostat (parliamentary discussion on this legislation) and altered the temperature, albeit slightly. Social movements could thus seize the momentum of humour in protests to make change, no matter how small, happen.

This paper aims at shedding light on the potential of humour to achieve social change. By focusing on the case of UK porn workers' recent protests against Parliament, we argue that humour measured their discomfort and initiated a discussion towards more adequate laws. We will examine two humorous protests organized by porn workers in London and how they obtained visibility before Parliament.

Wladyslaw Chlopicki – Jagiellonian University,
Krakow, Poland

Humour and linguistic (in)decency in the Polish public sphere

In this presentation, I will analyse the corpus of banners from Polish women's strike and other public demonstrations against the conservative populist government from recent years in order to propose the scale of linguistic expressions of discontent in public sphere, followed by the reactions to it expressed on social media and mainstream media. What is interesting are contextual factors – the assessment of indecency depends on the place where it is expressed – the public square/street, church, zoom meeting, social media, internet chats. The explicit swear words and other expletives, references to anatomy, sexual life, sexual orientations, excrements as well as any expression verging on the religious stand out among the examples. Parody (including quotations), sarcasm, irony, absurdity, references to stereotypes, or word play are frequently used as verbal humorous techniques, while the banners often juxtapose the verbal and visual, with caricatures, effigies, special scripts and other artistic means being employed for a stronger persuasive effect. The old question, expressed e.g. by William Chafe in “The Importance of Not Being Earnest” remains valid – can obscenity/indecency be humorous by itself? The answer is no doubt culture-specific, genre-specific, gender-specific and age-specific. I will attempt to comment on these factors and arrive at some conclusion about the Polish material.

Jan Chovanec – Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

‘Russian warship, go fuck yourself’: War-related humour in the European linguistic landscape

The presentation deals with the humorous use of originally non-humorous utterances in the context of public anti-war protests. Adopting a sociolinguistics perspective grounded in the social semiotic theory of linguistic landscape, it shows how a statement originally made by a Ukrainian soldier in February 2022 became globally known as an anti-war slogan, turning into a viral memetic phrase that became subject to extensive recontextualization and resemioticization. The presentation documents a broad range of cultural artefacts, including street art, public signs, postage stamps and even T-shirts, that became the physical carriers of this slogan in the public space, circulating it in multiple language versions (e.g., Russian, English and Czech). While such anti-war protest slogans and acts of military defiance are known from many other

historical situations, what appears new in this case is the widespread re-use of this slogan for humorous purposes. Significantly, this involves not only the slogan's creative appropriation by members of the public (e.g. meme creators, street artists, social media users), its marketization (e.g. its appearance on various products and the filing of an EU trademark application) but also its intentional recycling in institutional contexts (e.g. by the Ukrainian post). The presentation suggests that we might, among other, be witnessing the emergence of a new phenomenon, whereby various war-related content (e.g. utterances or video-footage) is re-used in an entertaining manner during wartime as part of one of the warring sides' official public communication campaign.

Manuel Padilla Cruz – Universidad de Sevilla, Spain

How could jokes be dealt with in the ESL class? A pedagogical proposal centred on comprehension

This work will present a pedagogical proposal to deal with jokes in the ESL classroom and sensitise learners to their complexity. It is devised for ESL students with an advanced level of English and ultimately seeks to develop their metalinguistic, meta-cultural and metacognitive abilities as a way of enabling them to grasp the humorousness of funny texts, appraise them and react to them in an appropriate way. Based on another six-phase pedagogical proposal to teach speech acts (Martínez Flor and Usó Juan 2006), this proposal consists of five instructional phases, during which students research on jokes, reflect on their humorousness, are explicitly taught about the factors intervening in their production, reason about specific sample jokes and revise the received information. Additionally, this proposal is also based on a relevance-theoretic classification of jokes made on the grounds of the linguistic, cultural and cognitive parametres exploited by humorists in their production (Yus Ramos 2016). Since such a classification only centres on how different types of jokes can be distinguished and what their successful comprehension requires, this proposal will have a cognitive orientation and will not address issues pertaining to joke production.

References

- Martínez Flor, Alicia and Esther Usó Juan. 2006. A comprehensive pedagogical framework to develop pragmatics in the foreign language classroom: The 6Rs approach. *Applied Language Learning* 16 (2): 39-64.
- Yus Ramos, Francisco. 2016. *Humour and relevance*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Rujuta Date – Independent Researcher

Creating Humour in Contemporary India: An Exploratory Study

In the 2021 World Press Freedom Index by Reporters without Borders (RSF), India ranked 142 of 180 countries. When those entrusted with keeping the public informed and updated are gagged, what are some alternative means of information dissemination. Some believe that comedy has the ability to shame the State into fulfilling constitutional obligations (Narrain, 2022), but what is the experience of those who are actually writing, making and performing this comedy content? The Indian comedy scene has exploded over the last decade especially due to digital platforms and social media. This exploratory paper is based on-depth interviews with individuals who create humorous content across various platforms and mediums. We see how these individuals act as ethnographers of their cultural surroundings (Conquergood, 1991) and mirror social realities through their work. The idea is to understand how they conceptualise humour, their approach to making content, the role it plays in their lives, and how their own social location affects (or doesn't) their content. In every age there are a topics that are ubiquitously understood to be off limits for public joking (Douglas, 1978), in India's increasingly majoritarian and populist regime recent incidents have shown that crossing certain lines can mean not just social shaming but also harsher retribution in the form of legal action and also jail time. The increasingly violent responses to jokes on the socio-political or religious events warrant that this period be documented not just as consumers of humour but also to highlight the distressing realities of our time.

Keywords: social-media, public comedy, content creators

Jessica Milner Davis – University of Sydney, Australia

The Politics of Stereotype and Caricature in Humour

The connection between comedy and simplified or stereotypical characters already existed in Classical Greek theatre. It was recognised in theatrical practices of the Middle Ages such as the naming of characters in morality plays for their dominant trait and developed further in the Renaissance “theatre of the humours”. Henri Bergson theorised it in *Le Rire* (1910) by showing that comic characterisation is shaped by mechanical rigidity, just as plots and verbal exchanges are. The artificiality distances the characters from the audience and lessens their humanity, rendering audience involvement with them strategic rather than empathetic. Despite the existence of sympathetic stereotypes (e.g. in Molière or Charles Dickens), humorous narratives and scripts require audiences to be sufficiently detached to enjoy comic struggles between characters, between them and circumstances, or both. Type-characterisation and caricature are stylistically linked and particularly vital for highly condensed humour forms (e.g. cartoons, canned jokes, sketch-comedy). This paper briefly examines the concepts of caricature and stereotype, asking when and why the latter term acquired its present pejorative connotations of being unfair and demeaning. It also examines the reasons why such treatments are innate to humour and comedy, outlining some of the implications for humourists and contemporary tastes in humour.

Phillip Deen – University of New Hampshire, NH, USA

Why is Comedy Considered Inferior to Tragedy?

Across various media, from literature to theater to film, comic works consistently receive far less praise than dramatic ones. This fact is mystifying. The long-standing philosophical problem known as the Paradox of Tragedy concerns the fact that we

enjoy artworks that evoke negative emotions such as fear or sadness, despite the fact that we rarely enjoy these emotions in everyday experience. Given that comedy evokes amusement, a positive emotion, it then seems odd that these artworks are given less value. This poses what might be called the Paradox of Comedy.

In this presentation, I weigh three explanations for the subordination of comedy to tragedy. First, there is the claim that comedy does not produce aesthetic experiences. Second, turning to the artwork itself, some claim that tragic narratives are structurally superior to comic ones. Third and most commonly, advocates for tragedy claim that the emotions it evokes are simply more profound than the amusement and other emotions evoked by comedy. Tragic or dramatic works are said to “speak to the human condition” to a degree that comedies do not. Each of these claims is weak. Ultimately, the supposed artistic superiority of tragedy to comedy is not rationally supported, degrades the value of positive emotions, and should be recognized as merely an irrational bias.

Phillip Deen – University of New Hampshire, NH, USA

Amusement: “Does Comedy Have to Be Funny? Chappelle’s 8’46” and Post-Comedy”

Dave Chappelle’s *8:46* is an example of a recent phenomenon labeled “post-comedy” by comedy critic Jesse David Fox. He defines it as using “the elements of comedy (be it stand-up, sitcom, or film) but without the goal of creating the traditional comedic result — laughter — instead focusing on tone, emotional impact, storytelling, and formal experimentation. The goal of being ‘funny’ is optional for some or for the entirety of the piece.” Recent specials have then re-raised the question of comedy’s essence if even funniness is inessential.

I will argue for a definition of comedy as based on the artist’s reasonable intention to evoke amusement from its audience. My argument draws from analyses of how we distinguish between fiction and non-fiction and from the fact that we distinguish and evaluate different artistic genres by the emotion they intend to evoke.

I will then apply this definition to specials by Chappelle, Drew Michael, and Hannah Gadsby. Each is admirable for its artistic craft, truthfulness, or moral vision, but such post-comedies, because their primary intention to amuse is secondary at best, are not actually comedies. Nor are they tragicomedies or anti-comedies, which are other forms of comedy that blend amusement with negative emotions like fear, despair, and anger or that find amusement in frustrating the audience's expectations about comedy.

Anthony Dion Mitzel – University of Bologna, Italy

“The Slap” Heard AND Seen Around the World: Unlimited Memeiosis and the Fecundity of Humor in Current Events

On the night of one of the Hollywood's most ritualistic evenings, an event occurred at the 94th Academy Awards, i.e., the Oscars, that rocked the normally genteel Hollywood audience as well as the general viewing public. This event saw actor Will Smith slapping and dressing down comedian Chris Rock during Rock's segment, which then became a trending discourse in traditional news services as reports were made and logged into digital space. Subsequently – and perhaps more importantly – “The Slap” event initiated an online discourse, which then in turn kick started “The Slap” meme-cycle. Due to this memetic event, “The Slap” created critical mass, which then emitted novel content out into the memeiosphere, i.e. the collective ecology of the world's memes, which then created novel memes and also became incorporated into various pre-existing meme templates.

This paper will discuss the current and evolving trend of verbal and physical violence being perpetrated towards comics by audience members as reflective of the current and deeply metaphorical Cultural Un-civil War taking place in the United States, often with humor being applied as the defining tactic. The presentation will also look at a small sample of memes generated from “The Slap” and provide ancillary context to the underlying mechanism of *unlimited memeiosis* i.e. the infinite regeneration of a meme cycle (author's term) in meme theory.

Keywords: Culture wars, Humor, Memes, Stand-comedy, Unlimited memeiosis

Alberto Dionigi – Studio Psi.Co., Cattolica, Italy

Humor and Attachment

According to attachment theory, individual differences in the attachment styles or orientations reflect different ways people experience and regulate emotions. Literature shows how differences in feelings of security affect the type of humor produced and appreciated. This study explored the interrelationships between two adult attachment orientations (anxious and avoidant) and humor, focusing on a list of eight lower-level styles, namely the Comic Style Markers (fun, benevolent humor, nonsense, wit, irony, satire, sarcasm, and cynicism). In this study, a large sample of Italian adults participants completed the short version of the ECR-R (Experiences in Close Relationships – Revised) and the CSM (Comic Styles Markers). Data collection is ongoing: results and implications will be discussed in relation to *previous* research. The results are expected to shed light on the relationships between the two styles of insecure attachment and the eight dimensions of the comic styles, in order to enrich what we know about the relations between these constructs.

Keywords: Attachment Styles, Comic Styles, Emotion Regulation

Róbert Ďurka – Catholic University in Ružomberok, Slovakia

Comic styles and HEXACO in the Slovak adult population

This is the first study to locate the eight comic styles in the HEXACO personality model. The eight comic styles (fun, irony, wit, sarcasm, benevolent humor, satire, nonsense, and cynicism, originally proposed by Schmidt-Hidding in 1963, could be measured by Comic Styles Markers (CSM) (Ruch et al. 2018). The six dimensions of HEXACO are honesty-humility, emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to

experience (Ashton & Lee 2009). Altogether 172 Slovak adults filled out two questionnaires: CSM (for measuring the eight comic styles) and HEXACO-60 (for measuring the six HEXACO dimensions).

The regression analysis revealed, that the personality predictors accounted for 17.7% of variance in fun, 20.8% of variance in irony, 23% of variance in wit, 37.8% of variance in sarcasm, 16% of variance in benevolent humor, 7.6% of variance in satire, 19.1% of variance in nonsense and 27.2% of variance in cynicism. Fun and wit could be explained by extraversion and low honesty. The benevolent humor is extraverted and agreeable. Nonsense is utilized by younger people with low conscientiousness and low honesty. People who use wit, benevolent humor and nonsense are also open to experience. Irony and cynicism are characteristics of non-honest and non-emotional younger adults. Satire is open, while sarcasm is neither friendly, nor honest. Satire, sarcasm, and cynicism are characteristics of men. According to the results, each of the eight comic styles could be significantly explained by the HEXACO dimensions.

Keywords: comic styles, HEXACO, regression analysis

Léo Facca – CLLE, Université de Toulouse, CNRS, France

Sexist humor

Sexist humor (a form of humor that disparages a target based on gender), may promote discrimination (Ford et al., 2014). The present study aimed at demonstrating that 1/ the appreciation and aversiveness of sexist humor targeting men and women depends of gender (in- group/out-group) and adherence to stereotypes, 2/ prejudices towards women predict the evaluation of the jokes targeting women.

College students (N=181) completed the Ambivalent sexism Inventory measuring prejudices towards women (Glick & Fiske, 2001) and stereotypes adhesion towards men and women (Gender Role Stereotypes Scale, Mills et al. 2018). One month later, they rated four jokes targeting men or women based on their perceived appreciation and aversiveness.

Results : The effect of the gender disparaged by the jokes and the effect of reading the sexist jokes on prejudices were controlled. Results revealed that the more participants (men and women) presented prejudices about women, the more they appreciated jokes targeting women ($\beta = .392, t(159) = 5.36, p < .001$) and the less they evaluated them as being aversive ($\beta = -.319, t(158) = -4.22, p < .001$). Women also presented a higher appreciation and inferior aversiveness for jokes targeting men than the same jokes targeting women ($t(179) = 3.95, p < .001, d = .58$) while this difference was not found for men for both appreciation and aversiveness ($ps > .16$). Results will be discussed regarding the scientific literature, especially the prejudiced norm theory (Ford et al., 2004) and the normative window of prejudices (Crandall et al., 2013).

Juan Carlos Farah – École Polytechnique
Fédérale de Lausanne, Switzerland
Chiara Mazzocconi – Université Aix-Marseille,
France

An Observational Study of Laugh Reactions to Bot Comments on GitHub

The use of bots in software development has steadily increased over the past decade. This is particularly evident on social coding platforms like GitHub, where bots are deployed to help developers with repetitive tasks. Often, bots deployed on social coding platforms can interact using natural language through discussion threads available on those platforms. On GitHub, for example, bots can post comments that users can then respond to using natural language or react to using eight predefined emoji. One such reaction, represented by the Grinning Face with Smiling Eyes emoji (😄), is referred to as the "laugh reaction". Our work focuses on bot comments that elicited the "laugh reaction" from human users. We obtained over 154 million comments made on GitHub's issue discussion threads between 2019 and 2021, identifying approximately 2500 bot comments that elicited at least one laugh reaction from a user. We then performed a qualitative analysis consisting of manual comment inspection and annotation of these 2500 comments. Preliminary results obtained on a sample of 100 randomly-selected comments suggests that when laugh reaction is used to

express humor, this humor is often not explicitly sought but arises from the bot acting in a unexpected way, which is best aligned with incongruity theories of humor. These results could inform the design of bots that aim to incorporate humor into their interactions with human users, as well as to better interpret how humans react to these interactions.

Keywords: chatbots, emoji, social coding platforms

Evelyn C. Ferstl – University of Freiburg,
Germany,

Comprehension of verbal humor in psychiatric populations:
The case of autism spectrum disorder, depression and
schizophrenia

Psychiatric conditions sometimes affect the sense of humour. In particular, cognitive and affective aspects of the comprehension of verbal humour can be impaired. To “get” a joke, working memory and cognitive flexibility are needed for the updating of an initial interpretation, when an incongruity in the punchline becomes apparent. In addition, the correct comprehension of the joke needs to be accompanied by an appropriate emotional reaction, a feeling of mirth.

To disentangle cognitive and affective aspects of joke comprehension, we have employed a comprehension test using different types of texts with the same simple structure (Hunger, Siebörger & Ferstl, 2009; Israel, Konieczny & Ferstl, 2022; Reichelt, 2021). A punchline follows the introduction of two protagonists and a context sentence. In revision stories, similar to the jokes, a cognitive reinterpretation of the situation is needed, but the texts are not funny. Finally, coherent and incoherent control texts are used to test basic language comprehension.

Three groups of adult participants with different psychiatric diagnoses read 30 texts in each of the four conditions, rated their funniness and answered comprehension questions. The comprehension performance was surprisingly similar in depression (n=28), autism spectrum disorder (n=23) and control participants (n=30). Only the

schizophrenic patients (n=30) made more errors, especially for the jokes. People with depression rated all texts less funny than the control group, while patients with schizophrenia had a selective problem with the jokes only. Ratings of persons from the autism spectrum, in contrast, showed a selective increase in funniness ratings for incoherent, nonsense texts.

These differential results will be further related to individual differences and discussed in light of theories of language and emotion processing in psychiatric disorders.

References

- Hunger, B., Siebörger, F. & Ferstl, E. C. (2009). Schluss mit lustig: Wie Hirnläsionen das Humorverständnis beeinträchtigen [Done with fun: How brain lesions affect humour comprehension]. *Neurolinguistik*, 21, 35 – 59.
- Israel, L., Konieczny, L., & Ferstl, E. C. (2022). Cognitive and affective aspects of verbal humor: A visual-world eye-tracking study. *Frontiers in Communication*, 6, 758173. doi:10.3389/fcomm.2021.758173
- Reichelt, A. (2021). Aspekte von Humor bei Autismus-Spektrum-Störungen [Aspects of humor in autism spectrum disorder]. Doctoral Dissertation, University Medical Center, Freiburg.

Mikhail Fiadotau – Tallinn University, Estonia

Between Self-Irony and Self-Advocacy: Digital Games, Vernacular Creativity, and the ADHD Community

The neurodiversity movement has increasingly gained prominence in public discourse. Its proponents advocate for neurological differences such as autism, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and dyslexia to be seen as just that, neurological *differences*, rather than impairments that imply that neurodivergent individuals are less than normal (Rosqvist et al., 2020). Yet, popular culture depictions of neurotypes like autism and ADHD often remain stereotypical, reinforcing stigmas that are harmful for neurodivergent individuals' well-being. Simultaneously, these neurotypes are often subject to trivialization, ranging from minimizing statements such as “Everyone’s a little ADHD” to jokes at neurodivergent people’s expense (Hinshaw, 2009).

Vernacular creativity—expressive practices, often digitally-mediated, that emerge from the bottom-up rather than from elite and institutional contexts of cultural production (Burgess, 2006)—can provide a counterpoint to stereotypical pop-cultural representations, empowering neurodivergent creators to express their own identities and perspectives. This can help raise awareness of the neurodiversity movement and build a support community for fellow neurodivergent individuals.

This paper will focus on humorous vernacular creativity in the ADHD community, providing a brief overview of its common forms such as “ADHD memes” (image macros) on social media and short-form videos on such platforms as Tiktok. It will then introduce a less prominent form: digital games. Using the short game *The Tale of the ADHD Dinosaur* as a case study, the paper will discuss the unique affordances of digital games and interactive media, the ways in which they construct rhetoric, and how amateur digital games can be a tool for neurodiversity activism.

References

- Burgess, J. (2006). Hearing ordinary voices: Cultural studies, vernacular creativity and digital storytelling. *Continuum*, 20(2), 201–214.
- Hinshaw, S. P. (2009). *The Mark of Shame: Stigma of Mental Illness and an Agenda for Change*. Oxford University Press.
- Rosqvist, H.B., Chown, N., & Stenning, A. (2020). *Neurodiversity Studies: A New Critical Paradigm*. Routledge.

Filipo Figueira – State University of Campinas,
Brazil

Laughing of manhood’s anxiety: a metaphor for us all

On this conference, will be presented the preliminary findings of an ongoing PhD’s thesis. Here, I intend to explore humor in its mundane relations to the social devices of power, notably gender and sexuality ones. Hence, I propose a linguistic and discursive consideration on the anxiety that accompanies heterosexual men’s subjectivation (THOMAS, 1996) as it appears in humoristic discourse as a form of “virile metaphor”. On the one hand, this conference rests on the consideration that humor works by

straining the limits of social expectation (BERGSON, 1901/2001; FREUD, 1905/2017) by resorting to familiar and easily recognizable stereotypes (POSSENTI, 2021). On the other, on the philosophical premise that language is the medium through which identity is performed and thus constituted (BUTLER, 1997). In terms of gender, this concerns both individual stylizations of the body (BUTLER, 1990/2003) and the social norms that provide the intelligibility matrix for these performances to occur (BUTLER, 2004). Exploring the early finding that said metaphor is applied to virtually any phenomena, even those that bear no relation to male and virile universe, the main hypothesis is that through said virile metaphor, values of male performance works as a “normalized pattern” for the comprehension of our everyday life, hence reinforcing male dominance.

Keywords: Manhood; metaphor; performance; gender.

Spyridoula Gasteratou and Villy Tsakona – National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

(De)constructing imagined identities through humor: Evidence from written humorous narratives by L2 learners of Greek

Discussing the construction of identities by L2 learners, Norton (2000) employs the notion of ‘investment’, which refers to learners’ desire and commitment to learn a second/foreign language so as to enhance their social and symbolic resources. Learners’ investment involves imagining themselves as being able to communicate with members of the target community, to whom learners also ascribe imagined identities (e.g. of being welcoming and considerate). In reality, however, learners often exhibit incongruous linguistic behaviors when communicating with members of the target community whose behaviors are also assessed as unexpected. Learners’ investment, imagined identities, and imaginary expectations of the target community are therefore violated. Such violations are humorously framed in the narratives under scrutiny.

The data examined consist of 137 written humorous narratives by adult learners of Greek. Besides the concepts of ‘investment’ and ‘imagined identities’, we rely on those

of 'script opposition' and 'target', which enable us to trace the humorous incongruities attested in the narratives and the persons considered to be responsible for them, respectively (see the *General Theory of Verbal Humor*; Attardo 2001). The analysis brings to the surface two categories of humorous narratives: (a) those including a subversion of learners' imagined identities as 'competent' speakers of Greek; and (b) those including a subversion of learners' imaginary expectations concerning the Greek host community.

References

- Attardo, S. 2001. *Humorous Texts: A Semantic and Pragmatic Analysis*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Norton, B. 2000. *Identity and Language Learning: Gender, Ethnicity and Educational Change*. Harlow: Pearson Education.

Keywords: narrative, imagined identities, second/foreign language

Guilherme Giolo – KU Leuven & Erasmus University Rotterdam

Time in Laughter: Exploring Humor and Memory in The Digital Era

How is humor entangled with the past? Humor studies is a multidisciplinary field of scholarship established around investigating how humor operates (linguistically and semiotically speaking) and its embeddedness in cultural practices (Chiaro, 2017; Mulkay, 1988). To achieve these knowledge goals, humor scholarship tends to investigate how various social phenomena are represented and negotiated in humorous communications: from politics and power to minorities and romantic relationships. Yet, being cultural creatures by nature, humans inhabit more than just the present. We are constantly delving into immensely vast repertoires of stories, characters, cultural artefacts, which we find ourselves separated from by time and access through acts of remembering. The past is an ever-present dimension of social reality, continuously employed to make sense of the present and imagine the future.

Thus, humor too often resorts to the past: classical art memes use canonical art to laugh at daily occurrences and mundane matters, comedy classics like *Monty Python and The Holy Grail* laugh at our imaginary of the precarity and absurdity of the Middle Ages. However, uses of the past in humor have not received dedicated empirical attention and theorization yet. This paper presents a research proposal that seeks to explore what roles memory plays in humor and, thus, how it is used to construct reality through humor. It proposes to achieve this goal by looking at entanglements of memory and humor within digital jokes from the global humor cycle of the Covid-19 pandemic. Working towards this, four propaedeutic research projects are presented. Their goals are to produce an empirical understanding of the roles of memory in humor, to account for how memories are used to construct reality in every-day humorous practices, and to understand how processes of remembering and reality-construction relate with the dispersion of information in online environments.

Elisa Gironzetti – University of Maryland, MD,
USA

Humorous Smiling: Applying the Smiling Intensity Scale for the Study of Conversational Humor

The Smiling Intensity Scale (SIS, Gironzetti et al., 2016) is a holistic FACS-based instrument developed for the study of smiling. The SIS comprises 5 different levels of smiling classified based on their visual properties (e.g., showing of teeth) and underlying muscle activation (e.g., FACS AU 12). The SIS has so far been employed to study the relationship between different levels of smiling and humor in computer-mediated and face-to-face conversations in English and Spanish (Gironzetti et al., 2016, 2019; Gironzetti, 2021), as well as in French (Priego Valverde et al., 2018). Findings from these studies found that (a) people's smiling intensity is higher in the presence of humor as compared to each person's baseline, (b) interlocutors tend to display smiling patterns that frame the occurrence of humor, and (c) dyad show joint smiling behaviors at the same SIS level with humor. The current study aims at validating the SIS as an instrument that can be applied to identify humor in a multimodal corpus. To this end, a set of 2 dyadic semi-naturalistic and computer-mediated conversations (approximately 26 minutes each, for a total of 52 minutes) was recorded. Each speaker was instructed

to break the ice by telling a joke given by the researcher and then continue talking freely for about 20 minutes. Each conversation was analyzed by applying the SIS to identify moments in which speakers show evidence of humor-related smiling behavior (that is, increased SIS intensity, framing smiling patterns, and smiling intensity matching). This initial coding is done one speaker at a time and without having access to the audio of the conversations, therefore not knowing whether and when humor was present in each conversation and not seeing the facial expression of the interlocutor, to eliminate the risk of rater bias. Then, the speech that co-occurs with these humor-related smiling behaviors is analyzed following the method outlined in Gironzetti et al. (2019) to verify whether any humor was in fact produced by any of the speakers. Findings from this study contribute to the growing body of research on the relationship between smiling and humor by assessing the degree of generalizability of SIS-based findings.

Keywords: smiling, conversational humor, smiling intensity scale, humor marker

Alberto Godioli – University of Groningen, Netherlands

ISHS 2022 Panel: Humor and the Law

From stand-up comedy to cartoons and memes, humor is often at the center of juridical debates and actual legal cases revolving around free speech and its limits. Yet, due to its elusiveness and subjectivity, humor can make it particularly difficult to draw a clear line between lawful and unlawful expression. How exactly does the law regulate humor? How do such regulations vary across different judicial systems and historical periods? And how can insights from humor research set the basis for a fairer, more consistent treatment of jokes in court?

Although recent studies have stressed the benefits of collaboration between legal and humor scholars (Godioli 2020, Little 2019, Capelotti 2018, Milner Davis and Roach Anleu 2018), the potential for interdisciplinary dialogue is still largely unexplored. This panel aims to give a contribution in this direction, by hosting four presentations analyzing selected jurisprudence in light of relevant notions from humor research.

The format will consist of four presentations of 12-15 minutes each, followed by a 30-minute discussion.

References:

- Capelotti, J P 2016 Defending laughter: An account of Brazilian court cases involving humor, 1997–2014. *Humor* 29(1): 25–47. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.1515/humor-2015-0128>
- Godioli, A 2020 Cartoon Controversies at the European Court of Human Rights: Towards Forensic Humor Studies. *Open Library of Humanities* 6(1): 1-34. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/olh.571>
- Little, L 2019 *Guilty Pleasures: Comedy and Law in America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Milner Davis, J. and Roach Anleu, S. eds (2018). *Judges, Judging and Humour*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Alberto Godioli – University of Groningen, Netherlands

Judging Jokes in the Digital Age: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Recent Jurisprudence

This paper will focus on how courts of law deal with humor in its various forms—from stand-up comedy to cartoons and memes—in the context of free speech adjudication. Particular attention will be paid to recent jurisprudence from the European Court of Human Rights (such as *Z.B. v. France*), as well as to relevant cases from national courts within and beyond Europe.

The paper will address the following questions: How do judges deal with the subjectivity of humor, i.e. the fact that the same joke might be interpreted in different ways by different audiences? How exactly does humor blur the line between lawful speech and potentially harmful expression (e.g. hate speech)? And what are the new juridical challenges posed by humor in the digital age, as controversial material can easily circulate beyond its original context?

These issues will be approached from an interdisciplinary perspective, with special regard to how insights from literary, linguistic and semiotic approaches can contribute to achieving a more consistent approach to humor in court.

Rey Gonzalez – Purdue University, Lafayette, IN, USA

Transformers Dissect Humor (Sometimes)

As language models become larger and more sophisticated, their ability to recall information in depth about particular topics with convincing communication can at times appear to be ideas from experts – even with respect to humor. Surely an evergreen benchmark for any newly acquainted model will remain natural language understanding, and since humor is undeniable facet of understanding, the potential for current and state of the art transformer models to analyze humor deserves its own study. To this end this presentation is designed to survey the general humor intelligence of state of the art language models by illustrating how models may dissect humor of jokes, as well as show how the most powerful models may assist in developing humorous situations. By exploring this potential through the lenses of humor researchers and experienced comedy writers, a further aim is to show how models on the horizon will indeed present expertly-convincing understanding of humor.

Works Cited:

- Attardo, S. (2002). Translation and humour: an approach based on the General Theory of Verbal
- Humour (GTVH). *The translator*, 8(2), 173-194.
- Chowdhery, A., Narang, S., Devlin, J., Bosma, M., Mishra, G., Roberts, A., Barham, P., Chung, H.
- W., Sutton, C., Gehrmann, S., Schuh, P., Shi, K., Tsvyashchenko, S., Maynez, J., Rao, A., Barnes, P., Tay, Y., Shazeer, N., Prabhakaran, V., ... Fiedel, N. (2022). *PaLM: Scaling Language Modeling with Pathways*. arXiv. <https://doi.org/10.48550/ARXIV.2204.02311>
- Perret, G. (1990). *Comedy writing step by step*. Hollywood: S. French.
- Playground – OpenAI API. (2022). Retrieved 1 May 2022, from <https://beta.openai.com/playground>

Christian F. Hempelmann – Texas A&M University, Commerce, TX, USA

What's Even Worse Than Shit?

Two central themes of things that we are not to speak of and thus swear with and joke about, i.e., Aman's *maledicta*, occur generally in the same location of the human body: sexuality and bodily waste. The present study addresses the latter theme in humor, but does not take the antiquated psychoanalytical approach (Freud, Bakhtin), in particular not its vulgarized version in *völkerpsychological* style (Wundt, Dundes). Rather, the opposites to the excretal scripts in the Raskinian sense will be analyzed, not as merely non-excretal, but as specifically opposed along several semantic dimensions. The study is part of a project to ontologize script oppositions as the basis of markup of humorous texts towards automatic analysis and generation. Initial findings, not least based on the jokes found in Legman's collections, indicate the two frequent constellations of frequent script oppositions, the well-documented good vs. bad and the hitherto rarely analyzed bad vs. worse. The content for these constellations for the former is often feces (urine) vs. food (drink), anus vs. mouth, and the related flatulence/feces vs. language. The latter, more interesting constellation was found to manifest itself frequently as feces vs. more feces, flatulence vs. feces, solid vs. liquid feces, and urine vs. feces.

Jarno Hietalahti – University of Jyväskylä – Academy of Finland

Humor and Humanism. The Significance of Humor for Humanist Thought

In my presentation, I will analyze the significance of humor for humanism. I argue that the phenomenon of humor offers an important counter argument to various criticism

targeted at humanism by, e.g., anti-humanists, transhumanists and post-humanists. It is very typical to claim that humanist philosophers consider humans as unrelated and overly rational beings. To put it other way, critics of humanism argue that the whole concept of human being is flawed and misguided in the humanist tradition.

To respond to the criticism above, I argue that the critique rarely considers the fact that humor has an important role in humanist thinking. If human beings are humorous creatures, then we are deeply related to others. Humor is an interpersonal phenomenon and there is no private humor (in the Wittgensteinian sense). Furthermore, humor shows that we are not one-sidedly rational, but our rationality is flexible and intimately connected to emotions and to what can be called our existential situation in the world.

Drawing from the tradition of philosophical humanism (e.g., Erasmus of Rotterdam, Friedrich Schiller, Helmuth Plessner), human beings are optimally flawed for humor; we know plenty, but our conceptualizations of the world are not perfect, and this opens the space for humor. In this sense, humor and laughter are expressions of human imperfection, and at the same moment, symbol for human excellency; we are flawed creatures who aim at perfection, and humor sheds light to both of these aspects.

Diego Hoefel – New University Lisbon, Portugal / Federal University of Ceará, Brazil

Comedy, horror and graphic violence: Brazilian allegories of the culture wars

Over the past five years, Brazil has been going through a turbulent phase, characterized by intense and pervasive symbolic conflicts between the two extremes of the political spectrum. During this period, a strain of humor particularly anchored in the imaginary of horror and filled with graphic violence spread in Brazilian cinema. This paper looks at three recent films that intertwine comedy and horror to examine their possible allegorical

link to the current culture wars. Through stories of ghost hunters, cannibal elites, or collective extermination games, these films transpose the confrontations of the macropolitical arena into each fictional microcosm. They translate the culture wars into

violent allegorical combats presented as something at the same time horrible and funny.

To address this discussion, I investigate the extent to which the fictional battles present in each film could be related to the cultural and symbolic dilemmas that have been dividing Brazilian society. I also consider the connections between the current sociopolitical turmoil and the development of a sadistic humor that combines comedy, horror and violence.

Keywords: comedy-horror; graphic violence; culture wars.

Noura Kamal – Institute for Social Anthropology / Austrian Academy of Sciences

Reclaiming the Public Space via Humour: The Case of Palestinian Political Prisoners

Palestinians have been living under occupation for decades and have often employed humour in daily interactions to mock the dire situation they encounter in their everydayness. Humour represents a central coping mechanism and provides one of the ways to pursue resilience because it can be widely shared and appreciated. Using humorous art not only aims to confront the suffering, but also creates a space where other people in different parts of the globe can acknowledge the Palestinian's struggle. According to Habermas (1964) public space is a domain where thoughts, values, ideas and opinions are formulated and are capable of reaching wider society. This paper tries to address the role of humor in the reconstruction of the public space within the Palestinian's context where individual's agency is manifested in everyday practice.

Social scientists have long discussed the relation between individual action and the forces of societal structures. Following Sherry Ortner (2006), agency may be seen as "cognitively and emotionally pointed towards some purpose." Ortner underlines the importance of intentionality as a vital aspect of agency. From this vantage point, this paper will shed light on how individuals employ humour to reclaim the public space via their daily interactions. This will be explored via reflecting on how Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails use humour and what role it plays in the construction of the well-being of the individuals.

Alexander Kathan – University of Augsburg,
Germany

Shahin Amiriparian – University of Augsburg,
Germany

Niklas Müller – University of Passau, Germany

A Personalised Approach to Humour Recognition

Humour is one of the most challenging behavioural patterns to study in social psychology and can have a major impact on the relationship between people. In addition, an automatic understanding of humour is of great relevance for a naturalistic human-robot interaction. Therefore, the automatic recognition of humour has gained increased interest in the last few years. However, recent artificial intelligence (AI) methods for humour recognition have shown deficits in adapting to individual characteristics of different people, resulting in a decreased performance, e.g., due to the high variance of voice or facial expressions. Moreover, one common weakness of all these models is their inability to transfer well to different types of humour encountered in practice. To cope with this, we introduce a novel approach for automatic humour recognition using audio features and personalisation methods, i.e., models customised to individual people. In particular, we train: 1) individual AI models for each person and 2) models with shared common layers for all persons in combination with personalised layers per speaker. For training and evaluation, we use the novel Passau Spontaneous Football Coach Humour (Passau-SFCH) dataset which consists of roughly 11 hours of multimodal recordings of German football coaches and has been labelled for the presence of humour. In our experiments, we achieve a mean Area Under the Curve (AUC) of 0.7731 across 5 different seeds using personalisation methods, compared to a non-personalised model, which yields an AUC of 0.7573.

Keywords Personalised models · speech processing · automatic humour recognition

Marianna Keisalo – University of Helsinki

Sense of Humor as Sense of Self: Multiplicity of Perspectives

My research project is a semiotic anthropology of Finnish stand-up comedy, analyzing the

sign processes involved in making people laugh. In this paper, I consider 'perspective', as

viewpoint and frame and how it relates to subjectivity, personhood, and 'sense of humor'.

One of the paradoxes of stand-up comedy is that it requires the comedian to develop both a specific perspective on the world and the ability to step away from it. The comedian needs to perform this perspective in ways that allow audiences to 'see through' it, and (at least implicitly) place it in context of other possible perspectives. Comedic performance relies on shifting perspectives; punchlines often involve radically altered views on the original set-ups.

Leading audiences through series of perspective shifts often requires comedians to inhabit

various first-person perspectives as well as taking on or invoking third person perspectives of him/herself. This is tied to sense of self as a kind of person and moral subject for both

comedians and audience members. The repertoire of perspectives the comedian draws upon depends on his/her social position, experiences, and style as well as the available sign

systems. How these relate to the perspectives held or imagined by the audience (addressed in the second person) in turn determines the success of a performance. A focus on perspectives also provides a way to explore possible interpretations of comedy bits: how does the joke appear from different perspectives? What perspectives does it assume or enable, and how are they evaluated?

Keywords: Stand-up comedy, performance, subjectivity, personhood, semiotics, perspective

Sylwia Klos – University of Silesia, Katowice, Poland

Frame semantics in the interpretation and translation of humour in children's literature

The goal of my paper is to examine the process of interpreting and translating humour in children's literature by way of mental map analysis of humorous text parts and their translated equivalents with the special reference to frame semantics (Charles J. Fillmore).

The mental maps created on the basis of mental spaces and conceptual integration (Gilles Fauconnier, Mark Turner) visualize all significant layers of the wordplay/funny phrase to be translated. Input spaces contributing to the emergence of the blend (wordplay) can be viewed at micro level, that is semantic and phonetic aspects of a word as well as macro level if we refer the meaning and sound of the word to conceptual structure or scene at which the given word/wordplay is activated.

As the word/wordplay is defined in relation to its background frame built on knowledge and experience on the world, its interpretation and translation into a target language depends on detecting the background frame hidden behind the construction of the word/wordplay in the original version in order to find the same or similar background frame to be used in word/wordplay reconstruction in the translated version. Mental map analysis of a wordplay/funny phrase supports the process of discovering the background frame as well as enables visualization of perspectives on or schematizations of the same scene in original and translated text.

To illustrate my theory I will provide some examples of Big Friendly Giant's funny language used in Roald Dahl's *BFG* and its Polish and Portuguese translated versions.

Keywords: frame semantics, mental maps, wordplay, humour, children's literature

Tuula Kolehmainen – University of Helsinki

“Very Funny, Then Scary, Then Funny Again. Yet Puzzling”: Misplaced Humor in Toni Morrison’s *Tar Baby*

When Toni Morrison heard her grandmother tell the story of Brer Rabbit and the tar baby as a child, she thought it was “Very funny, then scary, then funny again. Yet puzzling” (2004, xii). Through my own research on Black male vulnerability in fiction written by African American women, I have noticed something similar. The works of Black feminist writers depict the horrifying ramifications of slavery, segregation, and other forms of racist oppression and their influence on the African American community. They are narratives of loss, violence, and human evil. Yet it is their overpowering ability to make me laugh at times that puzzles me.

In my presentation, I focus on Toni Morrison’s 1981 novel *Tar Baby* (2004), which is loosely based on the trickster tale of the same name. Playing with stereotypes and readers’ expectations, for example, the author performs her comedic brilliance in a way that leaves the unsuspecting reader in awe. In the disorderly world of *Tar Baby*, even humor seems often misplaced. It is an incongruity that might make some readers laugh but is probably also why humor is seldom considered in criticism on this novel. I argue that for the Black male characters in this tragicomic novel, humor functions as a defense mechanism, a mask that conceals vulnerability and reveals aggression. Furthermore, laughter becomes, as Glenda Carpio suggests often happens in humorous stories of slavery, “a form of mourning” (2008, 7).

I presented my PhD project to an academic and almost all-white audience in the spring 2019. Surprisingly, when I described the representations of Black male vulnerability, some people in the audience laughed. I was not joking. This incident, which took place in Europe, had me thinking, whether (Black) male vulnerability is still such an incongruity that it makes some people laugh? Even in its lethality, is it an anomaly, a taboo, a joke?

References:

- Carpio, Glenda R. 2008. *Laughing Fit to Kill: Black Humor in the Fictions of Slavery*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Morrison, Toni. 2004. *Tar Baby*. New York: Vintage International.

Giselinde Kuipers and Mark Boukes – KU Leuven & University of Amsterdam

Covido Ergo Zoom: Coping and Collective Meaning Making Through Memes and Jokes during the First Global Humor Cycle

The Covid-19 pandemic brought about the first global humor cycle. Humor is notoriously culture-specific, and even today's globally connected world, humorous items and genres such as jokes and memes have a regional rather than a global reach. However, during the first wave of the corona pandemic, from January till July 2020, the same or very similar humorous items – mostly memes – circulated around the world. In this paper, we ask why people around the world resorted to – mostly digital – humor on such a massive scale? To analyze the characteristics of this humor cycle, and whether it was really as *global* as assumed, we have set up a data collection of Corona-related humor in the first half year of 2020. This resulted in a corpus of 12,337 collected humor items from 81 countries, almost all of which were spread and collected via a wide range of digital platforms. In most countries, the humor followed similar phases, though with different timelines. Looking at these timelines, we find that the humor partly served as coping mechanism: blaming and mocking others, highlighting absurdity and fictionality, seeking social support. This resonates with popular notions of humor as a way to alleviate grief and fear. Occasionally, we find that the humor also contains traces of resistance – another common understanding of humor. Here, we see considerable differences between countries, particularly depending on levels of political polarization and trust (note that this only concerns the first wave). However, a more unusual aspect of this “pandemic humor”, which sets it apart from other humorous forms such as disaster or sick humor, “normal” memes or political humor is the centrality of *collective meaning-making*. While people around the world were confined to their homes, they turned to digital devices and platforms to collectively make sense of their experiences, and to “bounce off” and verify their interpretations and experiences, notable experiences of alienation, boredom and social tension. We draw on symbolic interactionist and phenomenological approaches to highlight this aspect of pandemic

humor. Humor is a powerful way to test out whether people are “on the same wavelength” — a function that is particularly relevant in “unsettled times”. Our findings shows that particularly in the later phases of the first wave, people around the world used digital jokes and memes in such an “existential” way – not to cope, but to test out experiences on others from whom they were isolated in real life – but at the same time connected on an unprecedented global scale.

Maria Laakso – Literary Studies, University of Tampere, Finland

Implied audiences of stereotype humor: Case *Finnish Nightmares*

Stereotypes are without doubt an essential tools of humor. Stereotypic thinking however is often treated as racist, pejorative and overall harmful. In my paper I would like to challenge this critical understanding of stereotypes and suggest that often stereotypes are actually quite complex discursive practices. Stereotype humor does narrow the cultural diversity but it also serves as playful practice to cultural identity formation.

In my presentation I will discuss the audience structures of stereotype humor. I will focus on stereotype humor based on national stereotypes. I will take a closer look into an internationally popular webcomic *Finnish Nightmares* by Finnish author Karoliina Korhonen. The webcomic is about the social awkwardness of Finnish people, which is a well-known national stereotype. Finns are known to be introverts and the webcomic comically exaggerates this stereotype.

When analyzing the implied audience structures of stereotype humor I will apply narrative theory of irony – first because I believe that stereotype humor is often inevitably combined to ironic communication and second because a rhetoric theory of irony has analyzed the audience structures of ironic texts in a way I find applicable to stereotype humor. For example Wayne C. Booth in his *Rhetoric of Irony* (1974) famously discussed “amiable communities” that ironic texts build.

Finnish Nightmares introduces typical everyday scenes in a life of a Finn. The main character Matti is a (stereo)typical Finn. However the language of the comic is English. This fact alone creates an interesting dual audience structure into the comic: Finns laughing at themselves, non-Finns laughing at Finns and both being aware of the presence of another. These are the audience structures I will discuss.

Keywords: National stereotypes, stereotype humor, narrative studies

Jean-Marie Lafortune – Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada

From art in humor to humor in art

Comedians were slow to be accepted into the Union des artistes du Québec due to the low level of their training (compared to other disciplines: painting, literature, sculpture, dance, music). It is often through their appearance on television or in a movie, as actors, singers, hosts or dancers, that they became members of this union. In other words, the humor sector enjoys a weak legitimacy linked to its popular origins. The opposition between humorists and artists first lays in their way of life which, from ordained and conformist among the former pours into marginality among the latter. It would also manifest itself in the obsessive engagement of humorists in the relationship with the public (via social networks), unlike artists who prefer to keep their life private. It would be incarnated above all in the infinite creativity of the mind vis-à-vis the bodily finiteness, so that if the artistic bodies are shaped by discipline, the humorous bodies would not testify to any gymnastics other than that of the wit. However, after examination, performative humor is a matter of theatrical, popular and provocative art.

Liisi Laineste – Estonian Literary Museum
Anastasiya Fiadotava – Estonian Literary
Museum

Eva Šipöczová – Institute of Ethnology of the
Czech Academy of Sciences
Guillem Castañar – Saint Petersburg State
University

The cute and the fluffy: Pets, humour and personalisation in
political communication

When serious official political statements are not enough to get people's votes, politicians often turn to attention-grabbing and emotion-triggering self-presentation. They give the public access to their "normal, everyday" lives through personalisation and use other tools of "new" politics to create a favourable image of themselves. They can also show the unexpected, backstage aspects of their lives, such as their interactions with their pets.

The paper analyses four case studies from different countries (Belarus, Estonia, Slovakia and Spain) in which politicians' references to their pets became a prominent topic in internet communication and provoked numerous humorous reactions in the form of memes. By looking at various degrees of politicians' personalisation strategies, we show that "new" and "old" politics should be regarded as the poles of a continuum rather than a binary opposition. We also discuss the content, form and stance of the humorous internet memes posted in reaction to the appearance of politicians' pets in the news. Our research indicates that such memes function to provoke a discussion and, as a result, form a polyvocal commentary on events; the politicians, however, must take risks accompanying unconventional, revealing political communication and hope that "there's no such thing as bad publicity".

Laura E. Little – Temple University School of
Law, Philadelphia, PA, USA

The Many Ways Law and Humor Intersect

Law is everywhere. First are the obvious places—government administration, courtrooms, lawyers’ offices. But law is also in our homes, our jobs, our relationships, and our casual interactions. Humor is everywhere too. We should therefore not be surprised to discover that law crosses paths with humor in every realm. This presentation will provide an overview of the ways that law intersects with humor.

Perhaps most importantly for the life of comedy, law attempts to suppress and punish some humor, but also insulates other humor genres from legal regulation. Also of great importance is how humor styles morph to adjust to censorship in repressive regimes. More puns? More obscenity? More subtly? Methods of flying below (or above) the censor’s knife depend on culture, language, and the censor’s techniques.

Humor also mocks law. The most prominent form is lawyer jokes. Lawyer jokes provide a revealing window on society’s view of lawyers, but most agree that they reflect a worn-out trope and are not particularly comical. Of note, however, are other jokes about the complicated litigation system, self-important judges, stupid jurors, and the like.

Perhaps the funniest material emerging from humor’s intersection with law is humor **IN** the law. This includes funny bits occurring during testimony and other statements at trial, in court papers, in judicial opinions, and – best of all—in the facts of cases and the text of contracts, wills, and other legal materials. This may not be surprising, since the life’s spontaneity is remarkably effective in creating comedy.

Nikita Lobanov – University of Bologna, Italy

Humour, Hate Crimes and British Radical Right Users on Twitter

This paper presents an overview of my PhD dissertation (conferred October 2021) exploring the link between hate crimes that occurred in the United Kingdom in June 2017, June 2018 and June 2019 through the posts of a robust sample of Conservative and radical right users on Twitter. Based on a robust corpus of tweets from thirty Conservative/right wing accounts for each month of June over these three years, I examine the language of these users focusing on humorous content in order to reveal whether, and if so how, radical users online use humour as a tool to spread their views.

Through a reflection of humour seen as a moral occurrence, expanding on the works of Christie Davies (1998, 2002), in addition to applying recent findings on the behavioural immune system on online data (Shaller and Park 2011), my work offers new insights on the overlooked humorous nature of radical political discourse. Furthermore, a new perspective on the moral foundations pioneered by Jonathan Haidt (2012) can enrich our understanding of the analysed material through the addition of a moral-based layer of enquiry to my more traditional content-based one.

This convergence of theoretical, data driven and real life events constitutes a viable “collection of strategies” for academia, data scientists; NGO’s fighting hate crimes and the wider public alike. Bringing together the ideas of Davies, Haidt and others to my data, helps us recognize humorous online content in terms of the complex radical narratives that are all too often compressed into a single tweet.

References:

- Davies, Christie. [2002] 2017. *The Mirth of Nations*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Davies, Christie. 1998. *Jokes and Their Relation to Society*. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Haidt, Jonathan and Selin Kesebir. 2010. “Morality”. In Susan T. Fiske, Daniel T. Gilbert and Gardner Lindzey (eds.) *Handbook of Social Psychology*, 5th Ed. Hoboken: John Wiley, 797–832.
- Haidt, Jonathan. 2012. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Schaller, Mark and Justin H. Park. 2011. “The Behavioral Immune System (and Why It Matters)” *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 20(2), 99–103.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721411402596>.

**Birgit Maier-Katkin – Florida State University,
Tallahassee, FL, USA**

Humor Across Borders: Mark Twain and the German language

In his essay “The Awful German Language”, Mark Twain uses humor to reach across cultural and national divides. A favorite of students of German, Twain’s essay shakes the foundation of German language structure. Through wry cross-referencing, he

provides a rich intertextuality that ridicules, exaggerates, mocks, provokes, expresses dismay and simultaneously shares adoration for a different language system, and prides in mastery. By engaging in a process of localization and globalization, Twain exposes the challenge of border crossing. His humor points toward mental and lingual flexibility, and the willingness to engage with foreign cultural concepts. Twain's humor mixes thought-structures of his own culture with the foreign. This forces new meanings and coherence, but also creates community across borders, draws new connections and provides insights into the magic of language itself (to borrow a concept from Walter Benjamin). Using theoretical frameworks proposed by Immanuel Kant, Walter Benjamin, and Homi Bhabha, my presentation explores how Twain utilizes humor to create a lingual borderscape and offers a study of border behavior. As Twain laughs across borders, he demonstrates new perspectives on how people cross borders. Unlike the respectful diplomat or polite tourist, Twain demonstrates how humor can play a congenial part in revealing the challenging and entertaining aspects of the act of border crossing.

Keywords: Literature, Borders, Intertextuality, German, wry humor

Anthony Manu – Free University of Brussels, Belgium

Non-human characters and humour in the works of Paulien Cornelisse and May Kendall: a narratological and post-humanist analysis

Through a double case study of a poem by Victorian author May Kendall and a comedy show by contemporary Dutch comedian Paulien Cornelisse, my presentation studies humour relying on “non- human” characters that act, think or that are treated in typically human ways.

The script-based humour theories by Victor Raskin and Salvatore Attardo allows for the analysis of texts containing this kind of humour, since the trope involves a partly resolved opposition between the semantic scripts evoked by the text, the opposition being of the type “human vs. non-human”. However, in fictional narratives, story events

in which the differences between human and non-human behaviours, consciousnesses, and conditions are seemingly ignored are not always humorous (e.g. serious fables, fantasy, sci-fi).

My study firstly combines insights from textual humour theory with insights from literary theory and cognitive narratology to analyse which literary strategies and contexts make a reader interpret the trope in a humorous way. Secondly, from a post-humanist perspective and using insights from critical humour studies, I investigate to what degree the humour problematizes or reinforces the anthropocentric view of an absolute opposition between human and animal. Finally, I analyse to what extent and how my findings contribute to a reading of each work as criticizing an anthropocentric worldview.

References:

- Attardo, Salvatore. *Humorous texts: A semantic and pragmatic analysis*. Walter de Gruyter, 2010.
- Raskin, Victor. *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor*. Springer Science & Business Media, 1984.

Michelle Matter – Colorado State University, CO, USA

Silly, Serious, or Snarky: Humor’s Effect on Support Message Perceptions”

Effective social support is crucial for relational and personal well-being, but knowing what to say when providing support can be challenging. Some people incorporate humor into their supportive messages, as humor can have many interpersonal benefits; yet humor also carries the potential to bring harm to others. This study experimentally assessed the effects of humorous statements on perceptions of social support. Participants (n = 219) read a hypothetical situation and then viewed one of three video recordings of a high verbal person-centered emotional support message that contained either positive humor (general joking), negative humor (sarcasm), or no humor.

Participants then rated the message on its effectiveness and comfort provision and rated the speaker on her likability, perceived competence, and general supportiveness. A series of one-way ANOVA tests revealed that participants' perceptions of both the message and the supporter differed significantly across the three conditions. Interestingly, the message containing no humor received the highest ratings on all measures, while the message containing negative humor received the lowest ratings. These results highlight the major impact that even single humorous statements can have on overall perceptions of support quality and suggest that, although humor can have positive interpersonal benefits in some contexts, social support may not be one of those contexts. This is one of the first studies to directly test the effects of humor on support message perceptions.

Chiara Mazzocconi and Béatrice Priego-Valverde – Aix Marseille Université, France

Humour development in mother-child interaction: from 12 to 36 months.

The relation between laughter, humour and the socio-cognitive development of babies has been discussed by many researchers (for reviews: Martin (2007); Mireault and Reddy (2016)). Nevertheless, a structured longitudinal investigation of humour development is still lacking.

In the current work we analyse humour appreciation and production in 4 North-American children (Providence Corpus, Demuth et al. (2006)). We annotated 30 minutes of recorded naturalistic mother-child interaction at intervals of 6 months (12, 18, 24, 30, 36 months).

Following the methodology used by Archakis and Tsakona (2005) in adult conversation, we established two criteria for humorous episodes identification: (1) the occurrence of a laughter and (2) the identification of a Script Opposition (SO) (GTVH, Attardo (2001)). Overall we identified 305 laughs related to humour. Each humorous episode was annotated in terms of domain (i.e. Natural World: Human scheme, Physical laws, Object use; Social- sphere: Default scripts, Moral rules, Conversational conventions;

Metalinguistic-sphere: Phonetics, Phonology, Semantics and Pragmatics) and SO. SO was annotated following the hierarchical methodology proposed by Hempelmann and Ruch (2005) (i.e. im/possible, ab/normal (un/expected), or non/actual).

Our results show that some SO are first appreciated by the child in perception and only later exploited in the humorous episodes produced by him/herself. We observe developmental trajectories in the domains child humour is related to, reflecting their neuro-psychological development from a cognitive and social perspective. Our results invite for a refinement of the humour developmental stages proposed by McGhee (1979), showing that some types of humour are appreciated by children earlier than previously postulated.

References:

- Argiris Archakis and Villy Tsakona. 2005. Analyzing conversational data in gtvh terms: A new approach to the issue of identity construction via humor. *Humor*, 18(1):41–68.
- Salvatore Attardo. 2001. *Humorous Texts: A Semantic and Pragmatic Analysis*. Walter de Gruyter.
- Katherine Demuth, Jennifer Culbertson, and Jennifer Alter. 2006. Word-minimality, epenthesis and coda licensing in the early acquisition of english. *Language and Speech*, 49(2):137–173.
- Christian F Hempelmann and Willibald Ruch. 2005. 3 wd meets gtvh: Breaking the ground for interdisciplinary humor research.
- Rod A Martin. 2007. *The psychology of humor: An integrative approach*. Elsevier.
- Paul McGhee. 1979. *Humor: Its origin and development*. WH Freeman San Francisco.
- Gina C Mireault and Vasudevi Reddy. 2016. *Humor in infants: developmental and psychological perspectives*. Springer.

Julie-Anne Meaney – University of Edinburgh,
UK

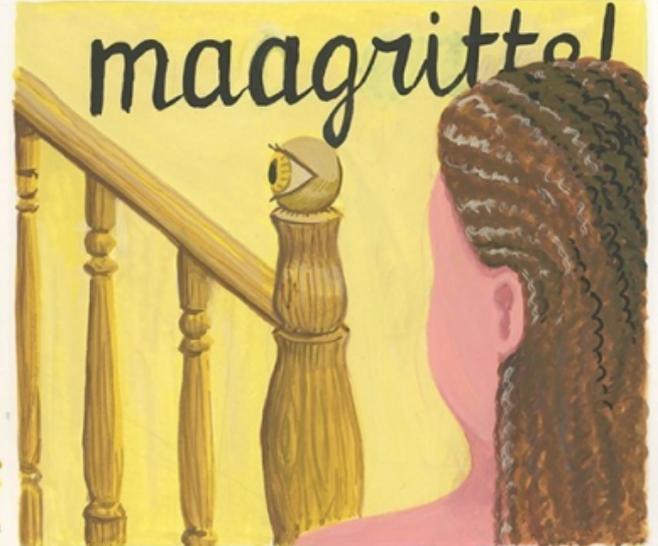
Humor and Offense Ratings as a Function of Demographic
Variables

SemEval 2021 featured HaHackathon, a combined humor and offense detection task. The task dataset features 10,000 texts, each rated for humor and offense by approximately 20 annotators per text, spanning ages 18-70. More than 50 teams took part in predicting these ratings, to great success. We will present an overview of successful methods used to tackle this problem, including domain adaptation and pseudo-labelling.

An unreleased area of the dataset also contains demographic information related to each annotator, which was collected in an effort to model the impact of demographic variables on humor and offense ratings. We present preliminary findings on this area, and links between humor and offense.

Steve René Michiels – KU Leuven, Belgium

Self-censorship- corrected thoughts of an artist “Which visual censorship is necessary today?”



Magritte?

A visual investigation into the (self) censorship of and by the current cartoonist, Magritte's surrealism and fake news. The research consists of the creative process of a graphic novel, in which a fictional autobiographical narration is presented, linked to surrealism and fake news. Magritte talked about the deception of images. But today we seem to adapt text and image to what we want to believe. We manipulate until it we get what we want. Did we move on into a time where text and image interact differently? Can it be taken literally? Is the ambiguity being destroyed? How can a cartoonist deal with this? Can he problematize and visualize the problem himself? How does he censor himself and his time and how is he being censored on his turn?

Based on my personal experience as a cartoonist, I want to investigate the topicality of the phenomenon of "censorship" and propose the meaningful use of it. I want to map and try to understand, process censorship and self-censorship within cartoons in a broader sense within the current visual culture. My main artistic occupation is making drawings for newspapers and magazines. However, since the attacks on Charlie Hebdo and the economical cut backs after the banking crisis in 2008, I have the impression,

along with other cartoonist colleagues, that our profession is gradually disappearing and experiencing heavy pressure.

Tristan Miller – Austrian Research Institute for Artificial Intelligence

Reinhold Aman: The Oracle of Opprobrium

Reinhold Aman, the celebrated and controversial expert on vulgar and offensive language, died on March 2, 2019 at the age of 82. An outcast from established academia, Aman founded *Maledicta: The International Research Center for the Study of Verbal Aggression* and served as the full-time editor of its eponymous journal. Published in a time before there were any dedicated humor studies journals, *Maledicta* ended up serving as a venue for the dissemination of some notable humor research, including works by Don Nilsen, Victor Raskin, and Leonard Feinberg. Aman's notability in both lay and scholarly circles led to his being invited to deliver the keynote address at the first conference of the World Humor and Irony Membership (WHIM) in 1982. Co-organizers Don and Alleen Nilsen credit Aman's attendance at WHIM with "giving us the news coverage we needed in order to later become the International Society for Humor Studies". This paper provides a wide-ranging retrospective of Aman's life and work, with a focus on his contributions to the field of humor studies.

Niklas Müller – University of Passau, Germany

Executive humor: towards a multi-modal automated measurement

We contribute to the research field of strategic communication by leveraging machine learning for large-scale, multi-dimensional measure of executive humor. Humor, one of the most fundamental and complex phenomena in social psychology, has gathered

increasing attention in management research. However, scholarly understanding of executives' humor remains substantially limited, largely because research in this domain has primarily been qualitative, survey-based, and small scale. We harness our access to a particularly suitable discursive vehicle for measuring executive humor, namely, video recordings of football coaches' press-conferences in the German "Bundesliga" and the English Premier League in the years 2017 to 2022. This data

is especially interesting because football coaches display (partially) ad-hoc communication and are organizational 'figureheads' to internal and external stakeholders. We established a manual humor annotation process with human raters to measure the occurrence of four humor styles as defined by Martin et al. in the Humor Style Questionnaire (HSQ) and train a machine learning framework with the annotated data set. This study presented emerging insights about frequency, timing, and characteristics of executive humor. We found common humor profile properties – the fact that humor constitutes a comparable minority of total communication – and individual features, like variety of humor style usage. In our on-going research, we aim to develop an automatic humor measurement and start to investigate the effects of humor e.g., on social evaluations. Our emerging multi-modal measure of executive humor contributes to the research on humor as a key ingredient of strategic leadership as well as to computerized psychometry.

Keywords: Executive humor, multi-modal humor measurement, social evaluations

Jonas Nicolai – University of Antwerp, Belgium

The Age of Outrage: Wokeness, free speech, and the disorientation of Belgian stand-up comedy

In the wake of social justice movements such as #MeToo and Black Lives Matter, woke discourses have entered the mainstream political debate. Initially signalling an alertness to racial prejudice or discrimination, today, wokeness is also weaponized by anti-democratic discourses of exclusion against these very movements (Zavattaro & Bearfield, 2022). As a result, wokeness is often associated with political correctness and free speech, and predominantly where their boundaries lie. Comedy, to a large extent, hinges on the interrogation of these boundaries. As such, wokeness has

become a highly discussed topic in relation to comedians' political accountabilities as it challenges the premises of comedy's social function to interrogate through transgression.

In the United States, comedians such as Dave Chappelle and Bill Burr have explicitly voiced their concerns of how "cancel culture is killing comedy" (Aroesti, 2021). Although the Belgian political climate is arguably less heated than its Anglo-Saxon counterparts, Belgian comedians have increasingly begun to introduce wokeness in their material or discussions. One comedian at the forefront of this debate in Belgium is Michael Van Peel.

In this study, we critically examine the role of Van Peel as comedian and social commentator in relation to woke discourse. An in-depth interview with the comedian and a close reading of his columns and shows reveals how Van Peel reinvigorates a view of comedy as public pedagogy through a political- philosophical deconstruction of wokeness as a discourse of changing power balances. In doing so, we follow Nieuwenhuis and Zijp (2022) in their claim that the current political conjuncture is characterized by a repoliticization of humour, reintroducing comedy in the centre of ongoing discussions on the constituents of a healthy and democratic public sphere.

Ivo Nieuwenhuis – Radboud University, Netherlands

From Mocking Pastors to Roasting Politicians: Humour Scandals as a Sign of Changing Times

Humour controversies are as old as the hills, but seem to have significantly increased in both number and intensity since the rise of mass media in the mid-twentieth century. As such, they form an excellent point of departure for analysing the workings of humour in the contemporary public sphere, as demonstrated by Giseline Kuipers in her much-cited article on the Danish Muhammad cartoons controversy of 2005-6. Why did a specific case of comedy at a specific point in time infuriate so many people? What does this tell us about comedy itself, or about the society and culture in which the controversy occurred?

In a monograph that I am currently writing about Dutch humour scandals since the 1950s, I address these questions by studying a series of comedy-related controversies in their original media and political-historical context. One of my main findings thus far, is that humour scandals are often a sign of shifting moral and social norms.

In my presentation, I will further develop this point by analysing two Dutch scandals, stemming from widely differing, yet also comparable moments: the mocking of Catholic pastors by comedian Wim Sonneveld in a tv performance from 1964, and the roast of far-right politician Thierry Baudet by comedian Martijn Koning in a popular late night talk show from Spring 2021. Through a comparison of these two cases, I will discuss the various roles that humour can fulfil within a context of social or political change, from supporting upcoming values to revealing ideological tensions or rifts brought about by the change.

Will Noonan – Université de Bourgogne Franche-Comté, France

From translating humour in games to games about the translation of humour: the GamiShT project

Despite an apparently (or at least superficially) obvious link between methods and objects, videogames and their relatives have received rather less critical attention within humour studies than have other aspects of digital culture (e.g. Chiaro, 2018) or fields such as audiovisual translation (e.g. Dore, 2019). While many videogames incorporate elements of humour, attempts to apply humour theory to videogame studies (Dormann et al., 2006; Dormann and Biddle, 2009) have been relatively rare, perhaps because of a parallel tradition of game and play studies (Stobart and Evans, 2014) in which humour forms one aspect of interactive “ludonarratives” (Kallio and Masoodian, 2018). Humour is mentioned with some frequency within game localisation studies, in case studies (e.g. Fernández Costales, 2011; Solano Dueñas, 2019) or for the purposes of translator/localiser training (e.g. O’Hagan and Mangiron, 2013). Recent publications such as the collection *Video Games and Comedy* (Giappone et al., 2022) suggest a new interest in the comedic dimension of videogames, in parallel with vogue for “gamification”, “serious games” and the use of game-like products for a

variety of training and informational purposes (Hulin, 2021; Ishaq et al. 2022; Spanos, 2019).

Drawing inspiration from this context, this paper will outline the aims and preliminary results of the GamiShT (*Gamification de Shakespeare et de ses Traductions*) project launched in 2022, with the objective of developing a serious game in which the player is encouraged to navigate between samples of text from the works of Shakespeare, in the original version and in different French translations. Humorous, insulting and/or gendered references serve as nodes intended to offer the player a choice of interactions combining questions from several disciplines, from textual and translation history to the transmission and (re)interpretation of humour across time, space and literary and cultural traditions. Originally inspired by a drama workshop aimed at MA multimedia translation students, the project will offer an interactive tool for students and researchers to study the translation and transmission of humour.

**Andrew R. Olah – Western Carolina University,
Cullowhee, NC, USA**

Are These Cards Against Humanity? Effects of Disparagement Humor in Party Games

Through the lens of disparagement humor research, we explore the impact of a popular adult party game on its players. Cards Against Humanity (CAH) is a party game released in 2011 which advertises itself as “a party game for horrible people.” The game is quite popular, evidenced by the fact that over 50,000 units of the game are sold each month on Amazon alone, and has received translations for over 15 non-English languages. However, CAH also draws a fair amount of criticism. One critic notes that CAH “is designed to provide the thrill of transgression with none of the responsibility – to let players feel horrible, if you will, without feeling bad”. However, despite its popularity and criticism, there exists little to no psychological research on the game’s impact on players. The present research seeks to fill this gap using the frameworks of Prejudiced Norm Theory and Social Identity Theory, effectively exploring the validity of CAH’s criticism. A series of lab experiments using actual CAH stimuli tests the hypotheses that (1) for male players, sexist disparagement humor in CAH promotes discrimination

against women through the creation of a local norm of tolerance, and (2) for female players, sexist humor in CAH creates feelings of social exclusion through the experience of social identity threat. We also explore the moderating influence of the group's gender composition, looking at how the targeted group's presence and endorsement of the sexist humor may intensify the effects on male players and soften the impact on female players.

References

- Brooks, D. (2016, October). Letter of Complaint: Cards Against Humanity. *The New York Times Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/07/magazine/letter-of-complaint-cards-against-humanity.html>.
- Cards Against Humanity LLC. (2019). Cards Against Humanity Store. Retrieved March 15, 2019, from <https://store.cardsagainsthumanity.com/>.
- Ford, T. E. (2000). Effects of sexist humor on tolerance of sexist events. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26, 1094-1107.
- Ford, T. E., Boxer, C. F., Armstrong, J., & Edel, J. R. (2008). More than 'just a joke': The prejudice-releasing function of sexist humor. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 34, 159-170.
- Ford, T. E., Buie, H. S., Mason, S. D., Olah, A. R., Breeden, C. J., & Ferguson, M. A. (2019). Diminished Self-Concept and social exclusion: Disparagement humor from the target's perspective. *Self and Identity*.
- Ford, T. E., & Ferguson, M. A. (2004). Social consequences of disparagement humor: A prejudiced norm theory. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 8, 79-94.
- Glick, P., & Fiske, S. T. (1996). The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory: Differentiating hostile and benevolent sexism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70, 491-512.
- Hamrick, D. (2018, February 12). Cards Against Humanity: What We Can Learn From The Most Successful Private Label Product Ever [Blog Post]. Retrieved from <https://www.junglescout.com/blog/amazon-success-story/>.
- Romero-Sánchez, M., Carretero-Dios, H., Megías, J. L., Moya, M., & Ford, T. E. (2017). Sexist humor and rape proclivity: The moderating role of joke teller gender and severity of sexual assault. *Violence Against Women*, 23(8), 951-972.
- Tajfel, H. (1978). The achievement of inter-group differentiation. In H. Tajfel (Ed.), *Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 77-100). London: Academic Press.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behaviour. In S. Worchel & W. G. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations*, 2nd. (7-24). Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall.

Lauren Olin – University of Missouri, Columbia,
MO, USA

The Sense of Humor as a Virtue

While dispositional analyses of the virtues are now widely embraced, Neo-Aristotelian virtue theorists argue about what emotional, cognitive and behavioral dispositions are appropriately awarded status as virtues. So, is the sense of humor a virtue? This essay aims first to reconstruct Aristotle's own account of ready-wit, and argues that it should be counted as a full-fledged virtue, by Aristotle's own lights. However, it also appears that attention to wit and other "nameless" virtues compromise standard interpretations of Aristotle on moral character. In particular, I'll suggest that the analysis undermines standard interpretations of Aristotelian virtues as *reliable* cognitive and behavioral dispositions. In the last sections of the paper I turn to consider the question of whether understanding the sense of humor in the way that Aristotle suggests may ameliorate some difficulties afflicting contemporary philosophical and psychological approaches to the virtues in general, and to the sense of humor in particular.

Lauren Olin – University of Missouri, Columbia,
MO, USA

Truth: "Is Dave Chappelle a Liar?"

According to "received" views of lying: a lie is an assertion, the content of which the speaker believes to be false, but which is made with the intention to deceive hearers with respect to that content. By this definition, Dave Chappelle is a liar. He seems to have lied carefully in his early sketch comedy, and to have lied more carelessly in recent specials like *8:46* and *The Closer*. This is a surprising result. Even philosophers who reject "received" views of lying tend to agree that there is a sharp distinction to be drawn between lying and joking, or saying something ironic. Moreover, Dave Chappelle

is widely celebrated as a comedian *and* as a truth-teller, by members of both his popular and critical audiences. So: is Chappelle actually a liar? Or are philosophers just wrong about the nature of lying and its relationship to comedy?

I'll argue here that Chappelle is a liar, but that he lies in ways that challenge received views about lying in two directions:

(1) Following Bernard Williams, philosophers tend to conceptualize lying as a *thick* notion. On these views, to call an action a lie is to both describe the action, and to evaluate it negatively. Dave Chappelle's lies suggest that the question of whether an action counts as a lie must be treated separately from questions about the action's positive or negative (moral) value.

(2) Following Jennifer Saul, lying theorists have recently argued that cases of misleading and lying are (morally) on a par. Chappelle's pattern of lying with jokes suggests the truth of a stronger claim: sometimes it's morally better to lie than to merely mislead. In contexts where it's difficult to call attention to social ills and biases, lying the ways Chappelle does may facilitate advances in cultural self-awareness that mere assertions, and factual reports, do not.

Lauren Olin – University of Missouri, Columbia,
MO, USA

“Housing Mirth”

Like language and morality, humor is a species universal with evolutionary origins, and displays systematic cultural variation. Unlike other distinctively human evaluative capacities, however, humor has been neglected by philosophers and cognitive scientists. *Housing Mirth* first diagnoses the reasons behind these patterns of neglect, then articulates a unifying framework for humor studies. Along the way, it proposes a new theory of humor that bridges the gap between existing cognitive theories of incongruity, and psychobiological models of mirth. According to the “dismissal” theory, many puzzling features of humorous phenomena are readily understood as side-effects of the interaction between a cognitive system designed to generate accurate

predictions about what is likely to happen in the world, and an emotional system designed to motivate quick action in instances where those predictions fail.

Patrice A. Oppliger – Boston University, MA,
USA

Advances in technology in humor/laughter detection

According to Ruch (1990), smiling is the most frequent facial response to humor. Martin and Lefcourt (1984) added, “Smiles were taken to be facial expressions characterized especially by a widening of the mouth indicative of pleasure, amusement, and so forth.” The Mirth Response Test (Redlich, Levine, & Sohler, 1951) and the Children’s Mirth Response Test (Zigler, Levine, & Gould, 1966) assessed facial reactivity with scores ranging from negative response, no response, half or slight smile, full smile, and laugh. More sophisticated assessment tools developed over time, such as the Facial Action Coding System or FACS (see Ekman, Friesen, & Hager, 2002) and facial electromyograms and functional magnetic resonance imaging, which detects zygomaticus major muscle movements that controls smiling. We would like to explore new technology software that allows relative novices to measure facial expression with no need for special equipment or expertise. The Affective Afdex SDK 2.0 measures valence, basic emotions such as joy, engagement of facial muscle activation that illustrates the subject’s expressiveness (e.g., smirks and smiles) by analyzing video of the respondent. In this presentation, we will walk through the technology and demonstrate its application. The simplification of measurement has the potential to allow more humor response research.

Tristan Miller – Austrian Research Institute for
Artificial Intelligence

What's in a pun? Assessing the relationship between phonological and semantic distance and perceived funniness of punning jokes

Punning jokes are a form of humorous wordplay based on semantic ambiguity between two phonologically similar words – the pun and the target – in a sentence context where both meanings are more or less acceptable.

Previous research attempted to quantify and compare phonological features of pun and target, looking at correlations with acceptability and understandability. Additionally, semantic features are to be considered when examining the success and humorousness of a punning joke. It was the goal of this study to quantify phonological and semantic distance between pun and target words, and assess possible correlations with funniness ratings of the respective punning joke. Statistical analyses revealed a significant negative correlation between phonological distance and perceived funniness for two of the four phonological distance measures applied. This is in line with previous phonological analyses of puns which found lower phonological distance between pun and target to be associated with higher humorousness. None of the seven semantic distance measures applied showed significant correlations with funniness ratings, which leaves space for a number of interpretations.

However, other factors such as situational context or cultural norms may also influence the perception of funniness of punning jokes. Further studies should attempt to take these additional aspects into account, by collecting detailed demographic data or strictly controlling for possible confounding variables during assessment of funniness ratings.

Raúl Pérez – University of La Verne, CA, USA

The Souls of White Jokes: How Racist Humor Fuels White Supremacy

Having a “good” sense of humor generally means being able to take a joke without getting offended. Laughter is often seen as a way to ease tension in an overly politicized social world. But do the stakes change when the jokes are racist? In *The Souls of White Jokes*, Raúl Pérez confronts this unsettling question, arguing that doing so is crucial to understanding the persistence of racism and white supremacy in American society. Drawing from W.E.B. Du Bois’s prescient essay “The Souls of White Folk” (1920), Pérez synthesizes scholarship on race, humor, and emotions to uncover how humor can function as a tool for producing racial alienation, dehumanization, and even violence. Pérez tracks this use of humor from blackface minstrelsy to contemporary contexts, including police culture, politics, and far-right extremists. Rather than being harmless fun or a thing of the past, Pérez illustrates how this humor plays a central role in reinforcing and mobilizing racist ideology, solidarity, and power under the guise of amusement today.

Brief bio: Raúl Pérez is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of La Verne, and previously an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Denver. His research has been published in journals such as *American Behavioral Scientist*, *Discourse and Society*, *Ethnicities*, and *Sociological Perspectives*. His scholarship has been awarded and supported by the American Sociological Association, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, the University of California Center for New Racial Studies, the Working Class Studies Association, and the American Humor Studies Association. His first book, *The Souls of White Jokes* (Stanford University Press) will be in print July 2022.

Caleb Prichard – Okayama University, Japan

L2 learners’ humor competence with verbal irony online

Verbal irony, including jocularly and sarcasm, is very common in Web 2.0 communication, but recognizing it can be difficult, especially for language learners (L2). In certain cultures, verbal irony is less common or used differently (Fitzgerald, 2013; Kim & Lantolf, 2016; Okamoto, 2007). While effectively comprehending or producing verbal irony can lead to beneficial communicative and interpersonal outcomes, undetected irony can result in miscommunication, conflict, and demotivation. Research suggests that humor competence instruction can be effective in helping learners

improve their ability to detect verbal irony while listening (Kim & Lantolf, 2016; Prichard & Rucynski, 2020), but research on written verbal irony online is lacking.

To fill this gap in the research, this study involves three experiments involving Japanese learners of English ($N = 148$). The first focused on participants' ability to detect verbal irony in social media comments using a validated instrument. The second experiment examined the effect of instruction on recognizing irony using a pre-posttest, control group design. The third examined the effect of instruction on participants' productive use of ironic comments.

The first study suggested that participants had some difficulty with sarcasm in written comments, especially when paralinguistic cues were lacking (e.g., emojis). The second experiment found that instruction on recognizing irony led to gains in the experimental group's ability to recognize irony marked by paralinguistic cues. The final experiment found that instruction on irony increased participants' use of jocularity, even though this was not the intent of the instruction. Implications for researchers and educators are discussed.

Béatrice Priego-Valverde – Aix-Marseille Université, France

The multifunctional role of smile in designing and negotiating humor in conversation

Previous research on smiling and humor in dyadic conversations (Gironzetti et al. 2016; Gironzetti 2017; Priego-Valverde et al. 2018) has highlighted two results: (1) the role of smiling as framing an utterance as humorous; (2) the participants' smiling synchronicity tends to be increased during humorous sequences of the conversation. In line with this previous research, this study will investigate *the way both the speaker and the recipient's smiles are used as a resource for negotiating humorous utterances*.

In a first part, we will present a short overview of quantitative results highlighting that both participants of a conversation, whether they are speaker or recipient, tend to smile more during humorous than non-humorous sequences (which is consistent which

previous studies quoted above). In a second part, we will provide a qualitative analysis of some humorous sequences. Analyzing the way that, moment-by-moment, both the speaker and the recipient mobilize both smiles and verbal resources to jointly construct and negotiate a humorous sequence, we will highlight the multifunctional dimensions of smile which can serve as much to frame a humorous utterance as such, to react to it, or else be a humorous device on its own right.

This study is based on the corpus “Cheese!” (Priego-Valverde, B., Bigi, B., & Amoyal, M. (2020), constituted of 11 face-to-face conversations audio and video recorded. Each interaction lasts around 15mn and, after a reading task where the participants had to read to one another a canned joke, they were free to speak as freely as wished.

References:

- Gironzetti, E. 2017. Multimodal and eye-tracking evidence in the negotiation of Pragmatic intentions in dyadic conversations: The case of humorous discourse. *Unpublished dissertation*. Texas A&M University-Commerce
- Gironzetti, Elisa, Lucy Pickering, Meichan Huang, Ying Zhang, Shigehito Menjo & Salvatore Attardo. 2016. Smiling synchronicity and gaze patterns in dyadic humorous conversations. *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research* 29(2). 301–324.
- Priego-Valverde, B., Bigi, B., Attardo, S., Pickering, L., and Gironzetti, E. (2018). Is smiling during humor so obvious? A cross-cultural comparison of smiling behavior in humorous sequences in American English and French interactions. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 15(4):563-591.
- Priego-Valverde, B., Bigi, B., & Amoyal, M. 2020. “Cheese!”: a Corpus of Face-to-face French Interactions. A Case Study for Analyzing Smiling and Conversational Humor. In *Proceedings of The 12th Language Resources and Evaluation Conference* (pp. 467-475).

Panelists: Mark Ralkowski (Convenor), Phillip Deen, Lauren Olin

Panel on Dave Chappelle and Philosophy: *Amusement, Truth, and Goodness*

This panel focuses on amusement, truth, and goodness in Dave Chappelle's most recent comedy specials, *8:46* and *The Closer*. These specials raise important questions about the relationship between comedy and amusement, jokes and truth telling, and the ethics of humor. Phillip Deen explores the relationship between comedy and amusement, and he argues that Chappelle's *8:46*, like recent specials by Drew Michael and Hannah Gadsby, is best thought of as an example of "post-comedy." Lauren Olin shows that Chappelle's specials engage with truth in ways that challenge received views about the nature of lying, and she argues that a comedian's lies are uniquely capable of facilitating advances in cultural awareness. In the third talk, Mark Ralkowski argues that the controversy surrounding *The Closer* is rooted in a disagreement about what comedy is and does, and that this debate helps us see limitations in the "Stoic" view of humor developed by Freud and Critchley.

Mark Ralkowski – George Washington University, DC, USA

Goodness: "Is Dave Chappelle's Comedy Good for Us?"

Dave Chappelle has become a polarizing figure in the world of comedy. His friends and fans love him unconditionally, and he has won a wide range of prestigious awards for his recent comedy specials. At the same time, his critics have called for his cancellation, suggesting that his jokes are cruel, anti-scientific, transphobic, and dangerous. As GLAAD wrote in a Tweet following the release of *The Closer*, "Dave Chappelle's brand has become synonymous with ridiculing trans people and other marginalized communities." Most recently, employees at Netflix organized a walkout to protest the company's continued airing of Chappelle's controversial shows.

In this talk, I will argue that the conflict between Chappelle and his growing number of critics is rooted in a disagreement about what comedy is and does. Chappelle appears to be committed to some version of what Cynthia and Julie Willett call a "quasi-Stoic humor of self-transcendence." For him, humor is a worldview or a way of living that produces a kind of triumph over the world and its cruelties, even for people who are most vulnerable. (This is the point of the story he tells about his transgender friend Daphne Dorman in *The Closer*: "She wasn't their tribe, she was mine. She was a

comedian in her soul.”) Chappelle’s critics reject all of this. They argue that Chappelle’s jokes block compassion, promote prejudice, and potentially cause “real-world harm.” For them, “Stoic” humor isn’t a way of living that is open to everyone, and it is not clear that it is a beneficial “worldview” for anyone. I will conclude by suggesting that this conflict between Chappelle and his critics is irresolvable because it depends on opposing ideas about the nature of suffering and the healing powers of humor. Perhaps most importantly, it also shows us an important limitation of Critchley’s “Stoic” view of humor.

Michela Rosso – Politecnico di Torino, Italy

“Laughing at the modern city and its architects: Architectural critique through humour”

Since the origins of the contemporary age, the rise of a mass public and a reconfigured public sphere along with the diffusion of the popular press have deeply affected the way in which the city and its architectures are interpreted and judged. Among the genres addressing the modern city some emerge that seem to be highly effective in disseminating the architectural culture, displaying its distortions or singling out its vulnerable features: humour.

As part of a media-saturated public culture, humour is both a practice of social communication and a plausible portrayal of society, illuminating the ambivalences of modern life and uncovering the shock provoked by processes of modernization. This paper intends to unfold a possible catalogue of comic as applied to the spatial criticism of the city, of its artifacts and leading professionals – architects, artists and builders.

Punch’s sharp satire of the first World Exhibition, William H. Robinson’s caricatures of modernist housing, Jacques Tati’s parody of the *Corbusian* villa, Alan Dunn’s architecturally situated cartoons for the *New Yorker*, are some of the renowned entries of this possible catalogue. By absorbing the disturbing effects of modernization and turning them into laughter they give voice to a diverse range of feelings and social reactions, from distaste to overt dissent.

The broader ambition of this paper is to reappraise some crucial transitions in the history of modern and contemporary architectural culture by listening to voices that have often gone unheard within the consolidated architectural historical canon, through a medium that has previously been treated only as marginal.

Jason Seter – University of Zagreb, Stanford University

Croatian Stand-up Comedy as a Medium for Minority Perspectives

Stand-up comedy, a form of entertainment that usually features a sole comedian speaking from a stage directly to an audience, is one of the most candid and uninhibited applications of humor in the public sphere. In Croatia particularly, stand-up is an important avenue for elevating minority perspectives on a range of subjects that are not normally discussed in public life, including sexuality and mental health. Based on interviews with comedians in Zagreb, Split and other major Croatian cities, I demonstrate how this performance style serves as a platform for alternative opinion in a country where conservative viewpoints predominate. Although most Croatian comedians deny that their sexual, ethnic or political identities inform the bulk of their material, their contributions represent a minor, albeit pioneering effort to integrate an at-times provocative art form into an otherwise traditional – and conventional – cultural milieu. Also, given Croatia's relatively recent emergence as a functioning democracy, stand-up comedy represents a meaningful benchmark for gauging the actual breadth of new media freedoms and performers' willingness to address sensitive topics, including religion and the Yugoslav Wars. Powerful interest groups such as the Catholic Church still retain significant influence over Croatian television programming, but online content and social media are effective counterweights for performers looking to distribute their work.

Eva Šipöczová – Czech Academy of Sciences

The History of European Dictatorships of 20th Century in the Internet Memes and the Reflection of the Current Political Situation, on Example of Slovak and Czech Data

The internet memes, as a main representative of online folklore, are viewed as collective and unofficial ideas of societies. They spread motives and topics globally and react to them locally – depending on socio-cultural context. They usually comment on contemporary events and situations and find inspiration in all over the knowledge and the culture. The history is not an exception, especially the past, which did not pass away in Vansina's floating gap and it is still consolidated, re-/interpreted, reflected, or forgotten in the collective memory on official and unofficial levels and in individual memories.

The paper is focused on the using of the motives of the second world war and the communist regime in the internet memes to reflect and criticise contemporary political situations. This praxis is understood as part of informal sharing of historical narratives and unofficial collective memory. The data included in the research is from Slovak and Czech meme production between years 2020 and 2022. Based on qualitative content analysis of this data the paper shows how creators of memes re-/interpret history of the 20th century in new contexts and how they use symbolic values of the past leaders and events. Last part of the paper shows which strategies creators of memes use to comment on the present (e.g., a comparison, fake quotations, and comments).

Keywords: internet meme, politics, collective memory, second world war, communist era

Lucy Spoliar – Radboud University Nijmegen,
Netherlands

Staging Religion, Race and Gender in the Public Sphere:
Stand-Up Comedy as Representational Politics in
Contemporary Britain

The ways in which humour operates within and engages with the public sphere has long been a subject of debate. On the one hand, humour can create moments of mutual understanding, strengthen feelings of community and offer opportunities to challenge asymmetries of power. In this sense, humour is ideally situated to support Habermas' model of the "Public Sphere" as a space for the exchange of ideas and the advancement of a society of free, equal citizens. However, just as this imaginary of the "Public Sphere" can be criticised as idealistic and utopian, it must be recognised that humour is not a panacea, being inevitably informed by dominant cultural norms and scripts. Humour can (re)produce exclusion where those who do not "get" the joke, or do not find it funny, are "othered". In this paper, I explore how women with a Jewish or Muslim background in Britain have been framed as "humourless" in the public sphere along lines of religion, race and gender. I will then explore to what extent stand-up comedy represents a public cultural space in which the power dynamics and discourses of "serious" public spheres can be disrupted. Taking comedians Fatiha el-Ghorri and Rachel Creeger as examples, I will reflect on the potential (and limitations) of seeing stand-up comedy as a transgressive space in which new modes of discourse and self-representation can disrupt the conventional modes of governance that often shape the experiences of those marginalized in terms of religion, race and gender in the public sphere.

Keywords: stand-up comedy; public sphere; representation

Noémie Treichel – University of Fribourg, University of Geneva

Humor and laughter in individuals with autism spectrum disorder and Williams syndrome

My research focuses on humor in individuals with neurodevelopmental disorders, more specifically, autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and Williams syndrome (WS). While ASD is characterized by low social motivation and a negativity bias, as well as high seriousness and irritability, individuals with WS (a rare genetic disorder) are rather prototypically described as having high social motivation, as experiencing (or at least expressing) high positive emotions, and as being rather cheerful. As such, these two developmental

disorders seem to have very different socio-emotional profiles. Improving knowledge on humor in ASD and WS is essential to better understand these two neurodevelopmental disorders themselves, as humor is such an important part of everyday life's interactions. In addition, studying such different profiles should lead to a greater understanding of the nature of humor itself.

I will first present theoretical considerations of the study of humor in neurodevelopmental disorders. Then, I will present recent results of a survey-based study that confirms a high level of gelotophobia in autism whereas individuals with WS and individuals with Down syndrome (as an additional comparison group), seem to be protected from developing such a fear. Interestingly, our study also revealed the impact of seriousness and bad mood as predictors for the development of gelotophobia in autism, even transcending group differences. Finally, preliminary data on the expressivity of mirth in WS compared to typically developing children will be presented (research currently in process).

Villy Tsakona – National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

Tracing liquid racism in online satirical news: Evidence from Greek

When discussing the relationship between humor and racism, research usually concentrates on ethnic or racist jokes or on other humorous texts which expressly target migrants or other minorities. Relevant studies more or less explicitly ascribe to *critical humor studies* investigating topics such as how and why humor targeting the linguistic, cultural, or religious 'Other' reproduces and maintains social discrimination and inequality; how and why the generic conventions of humorous genres do not incite the audience to think critically of their content but instead enhance their tolerance for discriminatory and racist standpoints (see Archakis & Tsakona 2021 and references therein).

In this context, the proposed study attempts a different approach: it explores humorous texts that at first sight appear to have antiracist intentions. More specifically,

I analyze a corpus of satirical news coming from popular Greek websites and targeting majority people for their racist practices towards migrants. My analysis reveals that distinguishing between antiracist and racist interpretations is not an easy or straightforward matter: humor seems to blur the boundary between racism and antiracism. In order to account for this dimension of humor, I exploit the concept of *liquid racism* put forward by Weaver (2016) to account for the ambiguities of humorous discourse when it involves racist and antiracist meanings.

References:

- Archakis, A. & Tsakona, V. 2021. Greek migrant jokes online: A diachronic-comparative study on racist humorous representations. *Internet Pragmatics* 4(1), 28-51.
- Weaver, S. 2016. *The Rhetoric of Racist Humour: US, UK and Global Race Joking*. London: Routledge.

Simon Weaver and Sharon Lockyer – Brunel University London, UK

Enacting and Critiquing Intersectionality in Stand-up Comedy

As an autobiographical mode of performance that relies on a close relationship with the audience, stand-up comedy is interlinked to debates on identity, equality and social justice. Critical literature on stand-up comedy and identity has often prioritised the analysis of one aspect of identity, for example, gender or race or sexuality. This paper extends existing analysis to consider intersectionality in stand-up comedy. Innovatively drawing on stand-up comedy theory, theories of equality and intersectionality, and theoretical perspectives on the ethics of comedy, the paper explores how intersectionality is enacted and critiqued in contemporary stand-up comedy. To do so, the paper explores the performative dynamics of three contemporary stand-up comedians who have released Netflix stand-up comedy specials that have all received a wealth of media and public attention. These are: Jimmy Carr (*His Dark Material*, 2021); Dave Chappelle (*The Closer*, 2021); and Hannah Gadsby (*Nanette*, 2018). Via qualitative analysis of both the verbal and visual aspects of the Netflix stand-up comedy specials, we examine the enactment, and discussion, of intersectionality in terms of its representation of inequalities, privilege, discrimination and prejudice. Our analysis

reveals a number of themes that are enacted and critiqued by Carr, Chappelle and Gadsby including the intersection of race, gender and sexuality, the depiction of gendered violence, and the intersectional differences in the uses of disclaimers through which comedy is defended.

Keywords: Stand-up Comedy; Intersectionality; Ethics

Wei He Xu – Middlebury College, VT, USA

Rationalizing a “Funtastic” Skiing Feat: An evolutionistic tweak of the incongruity-resolution theory of humor

The incongruity-resolution theory of humor suggests that a resolution of perceived incongruity is necessary for humor. From an evolutionary perspective, this paper tries to deepen its author’s previous proposal to replace “resolution” with “rationalization” because the latter term more accurately captures the essence of this condition. Pivoting on the evolutionary inevitability of reasoning in human cognition, the paper argues that human sensory and intellectual perceptions result from various rationalizations. By analyzing the picture of the titular “fantastic” skiing feat, the paper demonstrates its percipients’ double rationalization—first in their sensory perception of the designedly eye-catching incongruity in the image; then in their intellectual perception or, more colloquially, *making sense* of this incongruity. The simplest such sense can come from merely identifying it as *nonsense* and/or recognizing it as a joke. Such sense-making can be unconscious or subconscious and instant. This is true of other, nonpictorial modes of humor as well, such as when one realizes one is a victim of a practical joke. The second rationalization can also be fully conscious, as when one struggles to see the fitting but obscure sense of an answer to a joke riddle. When all the other necessary conditions are present, figuring out this sense will form the last piece that completes the sufficient condition for humor, triggering humor reactions ranging outwardly from a faint smile to a hearty laugh.

Jennifer Young – University of Groningen, Netherlands

“If In Doubt, Cut It Out”: An Empirical Study of humour regulation in the UK Broadcasting Industry

This paper questions how the regulation of broadcast comedy in the United Kingdom might affect the censoring and self-censoring of offensive socio-political humour. It discusses key findings from empirical research into how the interpretation and application of law, broadcasting codes and editorial guidelines impact on the creation of humour for ‘traditional’ television and radio.

Given the importance humanities scholars attribute to humour’s ability to raise important issues worthy of public debate, to what extent does regulation limit the audience’s ability to receive information and ideas through comedy, leaving them less politically engaged?

This research was completed using interviews with writers and those in editorial roles who produce political satire and potentially offensive socio-political content. Participants ranged from self-styled ‘right wing’ club circuit comedians to broadcast practitioners in senior editorial positions, including Lord Michael Grade and the BBC’s Chief Advisor Politics. The interviews focussed on content regulated under The UK’s Ofcom Broadcast Code rules on Harm and Offence and Due Impartiality. The findings question if it is the rules which stymie creative content or if a concern about offensive humour upsetting the audience means important subjects are avoided because of a fear of a backlash. Whilst, as stated in the European Convention on Human Rights, freedom of expression is a qualified right, there is an argument that certain humorous content should be defended as ‘serious’ political speech in the interest of public debate.

Katerina Zacharopoulou – University College London, UK

Panel – Humour and Architecture

Although humour research has been continuously growing during the past years, the discipline of architecture seems to remain distant from the field. The lack of connection between the two seems peculiar considering the ubiquitous presence of architecture in our surroundings and popular culture, but could be related to the serious, sometimes reluctant towards humour, public image of the profession.

This panel aims to show that a relationship between humour and architecture does exist and has begun being the object of architectural research, and to introduce the wide range of trajectories that this research can take. The panel's three papers approach humour as a response to architectural design, a quality of built form, and a tool for education and communication, respectively.

Michela Rosso's "Laughing at the modern city and its architects: Architectural critique through humour" views humour as a powerful tool of architectural criticism, which can express voices ignored by the canonical history of the discipline. Katerina Zacharopoulou's "Designing for amusement? From the intention to the interpretation of humour in Clore Gallery and TV-am Studios, London" presents different types of humour found in buildings, from intended formal juxtapositions to unexpected changes in a building's immediate context, by discussing two relevant examples. Finally, Anuj Vijay Kale's and Shreya Khandekar's "Humour and storytelling in architectural education" reconsiders the role of humour in cartoons and comics towards empowering students and communicating architectural knowledge to a wider audience.

Despite presenting three different angles on researching humour in architecture, the papers all aim to expand the discussion beyond the strict limits of the discipline. They propose that using humour to study architecture and its history can allow us to better understand, design, criticise, and enjoy the built environment.

**Katerina Zacharopoulou – University College
London, UK**

“Designing for amusement? From the intention to the interpretation of humour in Clore Gallery and TV-am Studios, London”

Western architectural thinking has been characterised by a suspicion against humour, since at least the Renaissance. In the late 20th century however, the discourse concerning the Postmodern movement allowed a rudimentary acceptance of humour terminology in architectural theory and critique. The term “irony” dominated this discourse, but its potential to be amusing was often downplayed. The use of “humour” or “laughter” was much rarer, mostly linked to negative critique, or not adequately explained.

This paper looks at two Postmodern buildings in London, through the eyes of critics who chose terms explicitly linked to amusement, to present humour as a positive architectural quality. In two *Architectural Review* articles, written in the year of each building’s completion, architectural critics John Summerson and Jonathan Glancey reviewed the 1987 *Clore Gallery* extension to Tate Britain (Stirling, Wilford & Associates) and the 1983 *TV-am Studios* (Terry Farrell & Partners), respectively. Both authors suggested that the buildings’ potential to be amusing triggered a tendency for negative criticism in the discipline, leading to assets like functionality, respect to context, and low cost to be overlooked.

The paper argues that the critics’ terminology reflects a recognition of more ways in which architectural form can be amusing than those usually associated with “irony”, including visual puns and parody. These types of humour are, however, usually dependent on architects’ intentions, specific disciplinary knowledge, and conceiving buildings as autonomous, coherent units. The paper finally suggests that experiencing these buildings in their current state can lead to the perception of a kind of humour not currently addressed in the Postmodern discourse, one that considers temporality and context and shifts the focus from the author to the user.

Dick Zijp – Utrecht University, Netherlands

Nuanced humor: The affordances and limitations of humour in the public sphere

When we ponder the possible role played by humor in the public sphere, we may think of comedians who transgress boundaries and break taboos, and thereby spark discussion and debate about sensitive topics or speak truth to power. In this paper, I will challenge this rather one-sided notion of the comedian as anti-establishment rebel by pointing to another type of comedian, who prefers mild criticism over shock and provocation and thereby articulates what I call an aesthetic of ‘nuanced humor’.

Nuanced humor is a mode of humor that seems to fit in perfectly with the ideal type of the Habermasian public sphere. By arguing against political polarization and emphasizing the value of rational argument, this type of humour is part of our (neo)liberal moment by articulating humour as a form of ‘reasonable dissent’ (Holm, 2017). Hence, it presents an excellent case study to explore the affordances and limitations of humor in the public sphere. This paper will do so by presenting a close reading of two bits from the critically acclaimed female Dutch comedian Claudia de Breij (b. 1975), in which she recounts of her friendly encounters and final break with the Orthodox Protestant Dutch politician Kees van der Staaij (b. 1968). De Breij challenges a too easy understanding of comedy as a form of radicalism by presenting herself not as avant-gardist walking in front of the troops, but as a politically engaged comedian who responds to and accommodates social change prepared in the fringes.

Dick Zijp – Utrecht University, Netherlands

Those who laugh as a body today will march as a body tomorrow’: Critical comedy and the politics of community

Comedians are often celebrated for critically confronting their audiences, thereby upsetting deep-held beliefs of spectators and contributing to progressive change. In this paper, I will use

Dutch comedy as my case study to demonstrate that comedians' playful opposition to the audience has serious political implications, and reveals a deep suspicion towards political

community. By analysing this fear of the community, this paper contributes to a better understanding of the politics of comedy, and challenges the dominant idea that critical comedy is inherently progressive and emancipatory. I point to the separate ways in which two Dutch comedians from different generations – Freekde Jonge (1944) and Micha Wertheim (1972) – use humour to unmask the audience as proto-fascist mass.

Ivo Nieuwenhuis – Radboud University,
Netherlands

Dick Zijp – Utrecht University, Netherlands

ROUND TABLE: The Politics and Aesthetics of Humour in an Age of Comic Controversy

In the Spring of 2022, a special issue of the *European Journal of Cultural Studies* entitled 'The Politics and Aesthetics of Humour' was published. To celebrate the launch of this issue, edited by Ivo Nieuwenhuis and Dick Zijp, and with contributions of, among others, Nicholas Holm and Sophie Quirk, we organise a round table session in which we discuss the stakes of the issue with experts in the field.

In the introductory essay to the issue, we present these stakes in the form of what we term a *cultural studies approach to humour*. We outline four main characteristics of such an approach: 1) it studies humour in the plural, as a set of cultural and aesthetic conventions embodied in practices that are not guided by one grand social or political function; 2) it

seeks to understand how humour is embedded in relationships of power, and contributes to the negotiation, contestation and maintaining of social hierarchies; 3) it looks specifically at the form and style of humour, its aesthetics, and how on this formal level political meaning

is created; 4) it contends that, while humour often purposefully creates confusion and ambiguity, through its rhetorical and aesthetic operations it also has the ability to foreground particular interpretations, thus making the meaning of comic utterances less undecided than is often claimed.

During the round table session, we will first shortly elaborate on this approach and its implications for humour research at large, after which two experts will give their response: Prof Sammy Basu (Williamette University) and Dr Simon Weaver (Brunel University London). Next, we will have an open conversation with the respondents on their and our views regarding the politics and aesthetics of humour in today's Global North. The session will be moderated by Prof Giseline Kuipers (Catholic University of Leuven).

Confirmed contributors:

- Prof Giseline Kuipers, Leuven University (moderator)
- Prof Sammy Basu, Williamette University (respondent)
- Dr Simon Weaver, Brunel University London (respondent)