

## 26th Australasian Humour Studies Network Conference

5-7 February 2020

Griffith University, Brisbane, South Bank Campus

Theme: *Laughter and Belonging*

### Update from the Conference Organising Committee

The organising committee for 26th Australasian Humour Studies Network Conference (AHSN2020) would like to thank all of you who submitted your abstracts for this conference.

As you see in the photo, the Queenslanders are hard at work. We are preparing the program of the conference now. Aside from our great four keynote speakers, we have received around 50 abstracts, two workshop proposals and a panel discussion proposal (for full details of the keynotes, see the following article).

We request that presenters and attendees now head to the registration portal and register to attend the conference. You can find the registration portal following this [LINK](#) or visit the AHSN website and follow it from there.

AHSN decided this year to select its usual five postgraduate scholarship winners based on the merits of their abstracts. So please join us to congratulate Amanda Cooper, Ying Cao, Lara Weinglass, Alex Cothren, and Amir Sheikhan (see below for details of the winners and titles of their papers).



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For presenters, please do not forget to send us the final version of your abstract by the end of October. Please use the conference email address: [ahsn2020conference@gmail.com](mailto:ahsn2020conference@gmail.com)

Below we have provided some information on accommodation, travel, touristy things to do in Brisbane and surrounding areas of Queensland and more which you can also find by visiting the main AHSN webpage <https://sydney.edu.au/arts/our-research/centres-institutes-and-groups/australasian-humour-studies-network.html>

### Organizing Committee

- *Cliff Goddard* is a Professor in Linguistics at Griffith University. He is widely known for his work in language, culture and meaning, using the Natural Semantic Metalanguage approach and its sister theory ethnopragmatics. He has published a number of papers on cultural and ethnopragmatic aspects of social laughter and humour.
- *Reza Arab* is a PhD candidate in Linguistics at Griffith University. He has been studying humour-related speech practices in Persian (Farsi). He is interested in the philosophy of language and pragmatics. He has attended AHSN conferences since 2017 and considers himself a regular!
- *Angelina Hurley* is an Aboriginal woman and writer from Brisbane. A PhD candidate at Griffith University her work focuses on humour from an Aboriginal perspective. She holds a BA Ed, MA Arts Admin and is a Fulbright Scholar. She has presented at AHSN twice and very excited about the 2020 conference.
- *Zarek Hennessy*, a fourth-year PhD candidate at Griffith University, composing an artefact exploring fictocriticism and Sartrean existentialism. Having only attended the most recent conference, he is an AHSN newbie, but found the sincerity of those involved captivating and is excited at the interdisciplinary prospects that the study of humour might bring to academia.



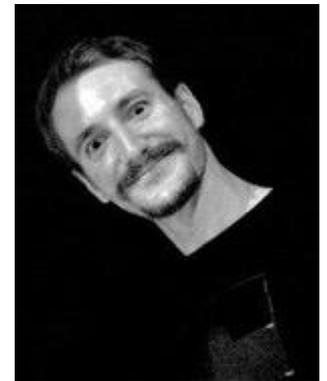
Cliff Goddard



Reza Arab



Angelina Hurley



Zarek Hennessy

### Enquiries:

Should you have any questions or need any help, please contact us at: [ahsn2020conference@gmail.com](mailto:ahsn2020conference@gmail.com)

### Sponsors:

The 26<sup>th</sup> AHSN Conference will be co-hosted by the Griffith Centre for Social and Cultural Research (GCSCR): <https://www.griffith.edu.au/griffith-centre-social-cultural-research>



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## Conference Information

**Conference dates:** 5 February (13:00) to 7 February 2020 (16:00), with optional pre-conference morning workshops, on 5 February 2020 (09:00-12:00)

Note to AHSN Board and Review Panel members: Please plan your travel to accommodate the annual business meeting from 16.00-18.00 after the close of the Conference.

**Conference dinner:** Thursday, 6 February at 6:30pm for a 7pm start (details and sign-up TBA via email after registration closes but before conference commences)

### Information on venue, transport and accommodation

#### Venue

AHSN 2020 will be held at Griffith University's South Bank Campus. The conference sessions will be held in Building S07 and the main public sessions will be organised at S06; i.e. **The Ship Inn** (pictured).



An established beacon in the world-class sea of the South Bank dining precinct, **The Ship Inn** has transformed itself from a rowdy sailor hangout to one of Brisbane's premier watering holes over its 144-year history. A dependable port of call, the hotel ensures a lively crowd, excellent fare and ice-cold drinks. The Ship Inn is part of the Griffith University's Southbank Campus (building S06 in campus maps) and will host AHSN2020 in February 2020.

Southbank Campus is located in Brisbane's picturesque South Bank Parklands and encompasses the [Queensland College of Art](#), the [Queensland Conservatorium](#), Griffith Graduate Centre (S07) and the [Griffith Film School](#). Ideally positioned in Brisbane's cultural heart, the campus is a 10-minute walk from the Brisbane CBD across the river and is adjacent to the Queensland Art Gallery, the Gallery of Modern Art, the State Library, the Queensland Museum, the Queensland Performing Arts Centre and the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre. Good eating places and bars proliferate along Grey Street.

Southbank Campus is located at 226 Grey Street, South Bank, Qld 4101. Read more about the Southbank campus [here](#). Southbank campus [maps](#).

#### Public Transport

**Bus:** You can catch the bus from a variety of locations to the **South Bank Busway Station**. This station is a very short walk from the campus.

**Train:** **The South Bank Railway Station** is directly across Grey Street, behind the campus.

Plan your trips in Brisbane with **TransLink app** or [website](#).

In order to use public transport in Brisbane (and also South East Queensland) you can buy **go card** which is TransLink's electronic ticket. Or you have the option to buy a single **paper trip ticket** at train stations or on the bus from the driver. However, please note that **go card** is a little cheaper than paper tickets. You can buy a **go card** at shops, newsstands, airport, and post offices. There are [two special tickets](#) designed for visitors and tourists that you might like to buy for your stay in Brisbane.

## *Getting to Southbank Campus from the Brisbane airport*

**Airtrain:** Train is the best and cheapest option. This service runs every 15–30 minutes. The train goes all the way through Brisbane to the Gold Coast and has a stop at **The South Bank Railway Station** immediately behind the campus, after **South Brisbane Station** at the other end of South Bank.

A **taxi** to the Southbank Campus from the Airport should cost between A\$45 and A\$65.

**Uber, Ola, or Didi** from the Airport should cost between A\$40 and A\$50.

**Parking:** There is no car park at the Southbank Campus (neither for visitors nor for students and staff). The car parks in the vicinity are managed by third party companies.

The closest car park is the Southbank Parklands Car Park which is underground parking below the campus.

[Check the rates and if necessary make a booking.](#)

Secure Parking also offers some parking options in the vicinity where Southpoint Car Park at 40 Tribune Street is the closest one to the campus. [Check and book online](#) for best rates.

## *Accommodation*

### **Four and Five Stars:**

[Emporium Hotel South Bank](#)

[Rydges South Bank Brisbane](#)

[Swiss-Belhotel South Bank Brisbane](#)

[Novotel Brisbane South Bank](#)

### **Medium Range:**

[Allegro Apartments](#)

[River Plaza Apartments](#)

### **Budget (hostels):**

[Brisbane Backpackers Resort](#)

[Breeze Lodge](#)

In addition, there are many reasonable offers on [Airbnb](#), [Booking.com](#), [Expedia](#), etc. You can also book your accommodation in Brisbane CBD which is a short walk away across Brisbane River to the Southbank.

## *Things to do / Places to See:*

### **[What's on](#) in Brisbane**

In [Southbank Parklands](#)

In [Greater Brisbane](#)

### **Day trips from Brisbane:**

[Gold Coast](#)

[Sunshine Coast Beaches](#)

[Sunshine Coast Hinterland](#)

[Gold Coast Hinterland](#)

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## Keynote Speakers Bio-notes

### Professor Meredith Marra

*School of Linguistics & Applied Language Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand*

Meredith Marra is Professor in Linguistics and Head of School (Linguistics and Applied Language Studies) at Victoria University of Wellington. Since 2015 she has been Director of the Wellington Language in the Workplace Project, a long-standing sociolinguistic research project investigating effective workplace communication in a range of contexts. Recent research has focused on the employable identities of skilled migrants, including collaborations with the Settlement Unit of the New Zealand Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment resulting in publicly available tools and resources for employees and their employers. Meredith has been analysing humour in workplace talk for 20 years, most notably the use of humour to subvert authority, as a leadership strategy and as a means of creating boundaries between in-group and out-group members. Her recent books include *Negotiating Boundaries at Work: Talking and Transitions* (2017, EUP), *Leadership, Discourse, and Ethnicity* (2011, OUP), and *Constructing Identities at Work* (2011, Palgrave Macmillan).

### Professor Robert Phiddian

*College of Humanities, Arts & Social Sciences, Flinders University, Australia*

Robert Phiddian is Professor of English in the College of Humanities Arts and Social Sciences at Flinders University, South Australia. He is author of *Swift's Parody* (Cambridge UP, 1995) and (with Julian Meyrick and Tully Barnett) *What Matters? Talking Value in Australian Culture* (Monash UP, 2018). He has edited (with Haydon Manning) *Comic Commentators - Contemporary Political Cartooning in Australia* (APIN, 2008), (with David Lemmings and Heather Kerr) *Passions, Sympathy and Print Culture* (Palgrave, 2016), and (with Jessica Milner Davis) *The Satire of John M. Clarke, Comedy Studies* 10.1 (2019). He is author or co-author of nearly 50 academic articles or chapters, and has in press *Satire and the Public Emotions* (Cambridge UP, due late 2019). Robert was founding director of the Australasian Consortium of Humanities Research Centres (2011-17) and sat on the board of the international Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes (2014-9). He has been on the Advisory Board of the Australasian Humour Studies Network since his daughters drew him with dark and plentiful hair.

### Professor Daniel Z. Kadar

*Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and Dalian University of Foreign Languages, PRC*

Daniel Z. Kadar is Chair Professor and Director of Research Centre at the Dalian University of Foreign Languages. He is also Research Professor of Pragmatics at the Research Institute for Linguistics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He is author/editor of 23 volumes, published by leading academic publishers such as Cambridge University Press. He has also published a large number of studies in international journals. He is Co-Editor of *Contrastive Pragmatics – A Cross-Disciplinary Journal* (Brill Publishers) and of *The Journal of East Asian Pragmatics*.

### Leon Filewood

*Winner of the 2018 Melbourne International Comedy Festival's "National Deadly Funny Competition", Australia*

Leon Filewood was born and raised on Waiben (aka Thursday Island), Kaurareg Country, in the Torres Strait. He graduated with a Bachelor of Law and Graduate Diploma of Legal Practice from the Queensland University of Technology. He spent several years in private practice as a solicitor in criminal and family law before going on to practice in commercial litigation, corporate insolvency and bankruptcy law. Feeling unfulfilled and isolated from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in private practice as a solicitor, he changed career path and became in-house counsel and divisional manager at a Local Aboriginal Land Council in Western Sydney. There he

managed the Land Council's housing, health, education and training services. Leon eventually moved back to Brisbane and currently works in local government as a Community Development Coordinator where he continues to serve the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. In 2018, Leon won the Melbourne International Comedy Festival's "National Deadly Funny Competition" which is a competition to find Australia's funniest blackfellas and to help develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander comedy. Leon has delivered a Tedx Talk, is a writer, producer and motivational speaker.

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## **AHSN 2020 – Scholarship Winners**

Ying Cao, Western Sydney University, "We are real friends": Teasing in the talk of Chinese female friends: A case study of Chinese reality TV show'

Alex Cothren, Flinders University, 'The "Participant Zero" in Satire'

Lara Weinglass, University of Queensland, 'Using conversational humour and laughter to belong in an Australian blue-collar workplace'

Amanda Cooper, Western Sydney University, 'Laughing on the Inside: Exclusionary Humour and Feminist Comic Critique in Jean Rhys' *Voyage in the Dark* and *Good Morning, Midnight*'

Amir Sheikhan, University of Queensland, 'Absurdity and jocular pretence in Persian television talkshows'

*Eds – Congratulations to all of our Scholarship Winners*

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## **A Note from Kerry Mullan, Chair of the (new) AHSN Board**

Dear AHSN Members,

This is a quick update to let you know that we on the Board have been quietly getting on with a few things behind the scenes, mostly reviewing and refining some administrative procedures around the constitution of two important AHSN bodies: the AHSN Review Panel (a multi-disciplinary group that since 2013 has served to ensure high academic standards across all the wide range of humour studies embraced by the AHSN at its annual conference and other events) and of the Order of the Jess-ters Awards for distinguished service to the AHSN (founded earlier this year at the 25th Conference which I had the honour of hosting at RMIT University, Melbourne). However, the most exciting thing we are working on is a new website . . . watch this space for more updates!

I am looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the upcoming 26th Conference next February at Griffith University Brisbane.

Best wishes,

Kerry Mullan

A/Prof Kerry Mullan | Convenor of Languages | Global and Language Studies  
Higher Degree Research Convenor [Social and Global Studies Centre](#) (SGSC)  
School of Global, Urban and Social Studies | RMIT University Melbourne  
E: [kerry.mullan@rmit.edu.au](mailto:kerry.mullan@rmit.edu.au)



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## **AHSN Submission to the ANZSRC Review of Research Codes**

*Update from the Chair of the AHSN Review Panel*

The set of three interrelated systems of classifying research in Australia and New Zealand (ANZSRC) has been in place since 2008 and comprise Type of Activity, Fields of Research and Socio-economic Objective. Last year, the ARC, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Statistics New Zealand and the New Zealand Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment began a review of both the overall structure and the specific categories contained within the three systems of classification. As previously reported in this august journal, the AHSN was most concerned with the two, four, and six-digit coding schemes that had been developed to categorise Fields of Research. There was an open invitation to make a submission to the Review and the AHSN duly completed a short submission concerned with the place of humour in the scheme. We were one of 245 submissions made. The Review body has now published a list and the content of the 218 submissions that were not made in confidence (see <https://arc.govcms.gov.au/anzsrc-review/anzsrc-consultation> for links).

A very cursory glance at the submissions that came from a range of sources from individuals, academic and business groupings, professional bodies, universities and national organisations, indicates that the Expert Panel face a daunting task. Many submissions were advocating more prominence be attached to a particular area of interest, usually at the lower level of classification, though some went much further to request a whole new Division, the broadest category of research. Perhaps one of the more interesting submissions came from Elsevier, whose international perspective and intimate concern with classification of academic material suggest their views might be afforded some weight.

The nine-person expert panel, which includes two international representatives from Canada and Germany, will now consult with a number of those who made submissions before making their recommendations. One feels their task is reminiscent of a piece of graffiti that was added to a poster advertising a local Labour party meeting in 1980s Britain, entitled, rather appropriately for 2019 Australia, 'How Labour will cope'. The graffiti added: "Next week – How to nail jelly to the ceiling".

Angus McLachlan

On behalf of the AHSN

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## **Members' New Publications**

Cliff Goddard and Kerry Mullan. 2019/2020. Explicating Verbs for "Laughing with Other People" in French and English (and Why it Matters for Humour Studies). *HUMOR: International Journal of Humor Research*. DOI [10.1515/humor-2017-0114](https://doi.org/10.1515/humor-2017-0114)

Lubna Akhlaq Khan. 2018. Construction of Matrimonial Identities through Humor: A Feminist Critique of Pakistani English and Urdu Jokes. *Pakistani Journal of Languages and Translation Studies* (6): 105-131.

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## New Researcher Profile - Jindan Ni

Jindan Ni, Lecturer in Chinese, School of Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University, Melbourne

First, I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to my colleague at RMIT University, [AHSN Board Chair] Kerry Mullan, for introducing me to the world of Humour Studies. And I also want to thank the two anonymous reviewers, for offering valuable literature for me to formulate my paper “Humours in Classical Japanese Narratives”, which was presented in the AHSN conference held at RMIT University early in 2019. Being trained in premodern Japanese literature, I was especially interested in breaking the rigid and monolithic image of ancient Japanese literature, which is usually considered as “restrained”, “elegant” or “woeful”, anything but “humorous”. By showing how humorous characters and plots are depicted in the well-known “elegant” Heian tale, *The Tale of Genji*, my paper attempted to demonstrate that the comic female characters in *Genji* are not only for amusing the readers, they in fact can be read as representatives of female’s subversion in a society where women were under vigorous control. After presenting my paper in the conference, I was able to rethink the *Genji* and literature in general from a different perspective. I began to consider that writing the comic stories and tales provides both writers and their readers a tentative sanctuary in the precarious life. The healing power of literary humour is immense, and I believe it is another significant element that would make literary humour stand out from other forms of humour.



My current research focuses on the impact of classical Chinese literature on *The Tale of Genji*. I use Western comparative literary theory to argue that by borrowing poetics, expressions, and plots from Chinese precursors, Murasaki Shikibu (the author of *Genji*) managed to produce a work of world literature at the Heian court in the 11th century: if her *Genji* later proved translatable around the world as a narrative fiction, it is because her use of Chinese sources made for a mode of composition that was already engaged “internally” with translation between Chinese and Japanese languages and literature. My studies provide a careful reading of the original text of *Genji* by drawing on Chinese texts that were in circulation at the Heian court, which I believe were familiar to Murasaki Shikibu; these influences have been largely ignored or marginalized by scholars of *Genji* in the Anglophone world. I am keen to open a dialogue between *Genji* and classical Chinese literature, such as the poetry of Bai Ju’yi, as well as modern European thinkers, such as Freud and Nietzsche, to explore how *Genji* addresses the human condition through its large cast of female characters. The basic premise of my research is that, once we take seriously the heterogeneous nature of this most famous Heian tale, we are able to address not only its enduring appeal but also its challenge to literary form as such.

Please feel free to contact me about my research at [jindan.ni@rmit.edu.au](mailto:jindan.ni@rmit.edu.au)

Dr Jindan Ni’s principal research interests lie in the dialogic relationships between classical Chinese and Japanese literature and culture, as well as comparative literary studies. She has published academic papers in translation studies, Japanese history and comparative literature. She is also an active translator who has translated books from Japanese and English to Chinese. Her research page at RMIT University is:

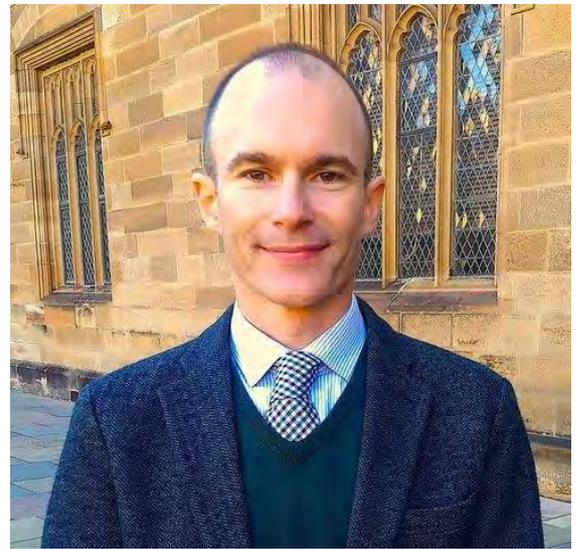
<https://www.rmit.edu.au/contact/staff-contacts/academic-staff/n/ni-dr-jindan>

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## New Researcher Profile - Dr Matt Shores

Dr Matt(hew) Shores, Lecturer in Japanese, University of Sydney

I was born and grew up in North Plains, Oregon, USA. This small town is today primarily known to outsiders for its Christmas tree farms, well-appointed golf course, and summertime Elephant Garlic Festival. Residents (North Plainers?) would also point out the bucolic scenery comprised of many berry and wheat fields, the three 'watering holes' along Commercial Street, two local airstrips used for agricultural aircraft and tourism, and one school—North Plains Elementary, home of the Hawks. There's not a great deal to do in North Plains, but there is a nice sense of community and people seem to enjoy to take the time to chat, share stories, and laugh. My parents and brothers and their families still live there, so I find myself returning to North Plains once a year or so.



The Shores family—the name is British, German, or Jewish in origin, not Irish as we once thought, and it turns out that we have distant relatives in Australia—has long valued smiles and laughter. In fact, when I told my parents that I wished to attend university with some of my friends, my mother gave a very natural response: she laughed. I might add here that I was a very poor student in high school. Was my mother laughing to deride or discourage me? Was it out of fear that her first son might not succeed? Today she tells me that her laughter was meant to challenge and motivate me. Well, I suppose it did these things, and here I am.

As the first person in my family to go to college, high marks didn't always come naturally, but the great thing about university is that—particularly as a postgraduate—I was able to select courses of study that suited my interests. I began as a theatre arts major, somehow found my way into East Asian Studies, then returned to performing arts—Japanese performing arts that is. I found that I loved traditional Japanese theatre, from noh and kyogen to kabuki and bunraku, but it was the comic storytelling art of rakugo that I most desired to make the focus of my research. I remember what went through my head as I considered getting a PhD: if I'm going to put myself through this, I want to be sure that have some laughs along the way. And so I did.

My research takes a multifaceted approach to rakugo and related arts. The study (and teaching) of rakugo is multidisciplinary by nature as it encompasses gender, history, language, literature, performance, and society. I also apprenticed with two professional storytellers in Osaka—I learned to perform rakugo of course, but, through my 'training' I also became skilled at housekeeping, preparing meals, caring for kimono, ironing socks and undergarments, and other critical menial tasks. I learned to read the minds of my masters, and this imbued me with the superpower to read the minds of all human beings and some animals. This came in handy at my first job, at Cambridge, where I was a Governing Body Fellow at Peterhouse.

For the foreseeable future, I plan to continue work on early modern and modern Japanese literary arts and entertainment (including rakugo) and I look forward to dreaming up interesting, worthwhile collaborations with colleagues in Japanese Studies and in fields far removed from my own.

*Feel free to contact Matt about his research at: [matthew.shores@sydney.edu.au](mailto:matthew.shores@sydney.edu.au) or call him on +61 (0)2 9357 9514.*

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## New Researcher Student Profile - Paige Townsend

Griffith School of Humanities, Gold Coast Campus

I study creative writing and literature at Griffith University on the Gold Coast.

At the Laughter Symposium, an event run in coordination with the Australasian Humour Studies Network by the Social and Cultural Research Centre of Griffith University, I fell into conversation with a fellow creative-writing student, Chantelle Bayes, about how humour related to our respective writing. She told me she'd never thought of deploying humour while writing about the climate crisis, but that she saw it now as a new way of approaching what many find to be a loaded and uncomfortable subject.

Comedy's light touch in the face of tragedy was an undertow at the symposium, emerging intermittently, though perhaps only because I was tracking it out of my own interest in the field. I'd told Chantelle that one of my favourite writers, Tom Spanbauer, after whom I model some of my own tactics in writing, teaches that "a good story should make you laugh, and a moment later break your heart" (cited in Palahniuk, 2002: 1).



It works both ways. You're limbered up and feeling safe because of the laughter, then, in this tenderised state, this vulnerable wide-open mood, something awful happens. The contrast is everything. As Nick Cave said in *20 000 Days on Earth* (2014), songwriting is "all about counterpoint". So, it seems, is much of the humour I'm interested in using, of how and why it affects us. The opposite – almost-broken hearts preceding the laughter – is a kinder and no less effective method: the tightening of tension, the risk of heartbreak, followed by release, reveal, a promise that all is well, again provoking laughter like a flood of relief.

This idea of counterpoint is central to my Honours project: a series of thematically linked personal essays, the first of which is centred on my experiences in living with OCD. Like Chantelle, I'm cautious in my approach to a subject as loaded as mental illness. The fraught relationship between humour and OCD has long been unravelled by researchers, the inherent comedy within the disorder's cognitive dissonance: OCD is so often deployed as a punchline because of the irony and incongruity built into its very bones (Cefalu, 2009). Part of me revels in that connection simply because it provides a counterpoint that becomes a sanctuary, a soft place to land after the tangled intensity of the disease is brought to light. A reversal of Spanbauer's method, in some ways. But there is a risk of playing the fool in this arena, of playing into OCD as a caricature of itself, just as Hannah Gadsby elucidates in her recent Netflix special, *Nanette* (2018), wherein she dismantles, from within, the humiliation implicit in some forms of humour.

The multi-directional dynamics of humour studies, the way it opens one out to view a cohesive arena from so many angles, speaks to what I love about both academia and creative writing. Humour as play mirrors this curiosity, the ability to take any subject and show just how expansive and joyous it can be. To write a new story I become a surface-layer expert in whatever it is I'm writing about, a kind of method acting.

Fiona Wright praises how creative nonfiction "works[s] by association and by juxtaposition, by bringing together ideas [...] and seeing what happens when they combine" (2019: 1). This is reminiscent of Alsadir's personal essay

about her experiences in going to clown school as a psychoanalyst writing a book about laughter. The surprising conclusions she comes to appeals to me in the same way as humour studies' multidisciplinary scope and creative nonfiction's alchemy. Alsadir writes of clowning as a way back to the "true self", of cutting through the social contract to "behave", which creates an "alienation from ourselves" (2017: 1).

In keeping with my love of linking patterns to create surprising cohesion in the face of dissonance, I noted that Cefalu described OCD as "fundamentally self-alienat[ing]" (2009: 46). But, of course, the distance between these similarities here lies in the clown's intent, their freedom and their connection to something more authentic within their nature. The person with OCD is left stranded between who they are and the rituals they feel compelled to repeat *ad infinitum*. Within this distance I've found a space to explore how to reconcile what can be seen as an implicit humour – such an essential salve – and what that humour reveals about OCD in wider contexts regarding stigma, power relations, and fear.

Cognitive dissonance is such a large part of my life that I've sought ways of cohering disparate states – from tragedy and comedy to mental illness and humour – until my arrival at creative nonfiction seems inevitable. So, too, perhaps, is my draw towards not just deploying humour, but coming at it from a rigorous, academic angle to dissect and explore how its relationship to OCD has taken shape, what humour's cognitive dissonance can teach me about my own.

Feel free to contact Paige about her research and creative writing at: [paige.townsend@griffithuni.edu.au](mailto:paige.townsend@griffithuni.edu.au)

*Works cited:*

Alsadir, N. 2017. *Clown school*. Retrieved from <https://granta.com/clown-school/>

Cefalu, P. 2009. What's so Funny about Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder? *PMLA*, 124 (1): 44-58. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25614247>

Forsyth, I. & Pollard, J. (Directors). 2014. *20,000 Days on Earth* [Motion Picture]. United Kingdom: Film4.

Palahniuk, C. 2002. *She breaks your heart*. Retrieved from <https://www.laweekly.com/she-breaks-your-heart/>

Parry, M. & Olb, J. (Directors). 2018. *Nanette* [Motion Picture]. United States: Netflix.

Wright, F. 2019. *On poetry and essays*. Retrieved from <http://southerlyjournal.com.au/2019/06/27/on-poetry-and-essays/>

## Griffith University LAUGHTER Symposium –

Report by AHSN member, Paige Townsend, Griffith University

September 9th's LAUGHTER Symposium was a warm-up act to next February's 26th AHSN conference – but the event held its own in terms of sheer range and lively discussion. Hosted by the Griffith Centre for Social and Cultural Research, the LAUGHTER Symposium featured speakers Jessica Milner Davis, Cliff Goddard, John Flood, Stephanie Green, Jessica Stroja, David Lambert, Kerry Mullan, Angelina Hurley, Lara Weinglass, Mark McConville, and Jason Nelson.

Jessica Milner Davis, as a pioneer researcher into laughter and humour's place in the academy, gave the theme an accessible, enquiring tilt from the get-go. This set the stage for the day's kaleidoscopic perspectives on humour and laughter, each one seeking to answer the same question: How does humour and laughter intersect with academia? And, more broadly, how many ways can we explore its landscape? Kerry Mullan, the AHSN Chair, reminded us too not to forget the cross-cultural differences that influence use and appreciation of humour and joking in social situations, contrasting Australian and French group practices.



Milner Davis highlighted humour's academic origins within the discipline of psychology and its expansion from there over the last forty years. Goddard explored the linguistic perspective, the tangle of language and laughter, and this was followed by John Flood's odyssey into and dissection of lawyer jokes. Green's presentation elucidated the tactic of dressing serious issues in funny clothes to showcase, by stealth and wit, just how significant the issues are. As the saying goes: half in jest, all in seriousness.

This seriousness was echoed in Stroja's talk on humour among refugee populations. Humour can become defiance as well as levity, just as it can reveal problematic power relations or, indeed, even become a tool of oppression, a way of shirking responsibility or punching down. Those power relations are everywhere evident in Blak humour: Angelina Hurley elucidated humour's power as arbiter of subversion and resistance when created by Indigenous writers and actors.

Law, history, psychology, evolutionary science, comedy, suicidology, popular culture, transnationalism and different cultural norms, multimodal storytelling – so many crucibles through which to pass humour and see what sparks up or fades. The scope of presentations was a good match in its sheer variegated reach for the multi-layered and ever-shifting complexities of humour and laughter: the different perceptions, values and uses attached, what it masks and what it reveals.



The LAUGHTER Symposium highlighted how academic discussion and research can be a playful (yet serious) questioning. Make sure to join us this coming February 5th – 7th at the Ship Inn on the South Bank Campus of Griffith University in Brisbane for the 26th Australasian Humour Studies Network Conference. We look forward to seeing how this ongoing dialogue will take shape through many varied perspectives and disciplines.

Thanks to all members of the Organising Committee for a highly successful and enjoyable day: Zarek Hennessy, Cliff Goddard, Reza Arab, Angelina Hurley and Kimberley Podger.

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## **Members' News from Ronald Stewart, Daito Bunka University, Tokyo**

Recently, Ron was invited to present at a symposium in London's British Library to accompany an exhibition on manga at the British Museum. He reports:

My presentation at the British Museum/British Library symposium on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2019 went well. I presented on the topic, "Kitazawa Rakuten and Modern Manga". I was the only speaker to touch directly on political cartoons and on humour in Japanese manga as most of the symposium concerned manga (comics) as a "medium" and its development, structure and related culture, as well as the place of manga in museums. It was an honour to have been invited to speak there, and I really enjoyed being at the symposium, seeing the exhibition as well as two other related events, and meeting other experts and people. The Symposium was presented by the Japan Foundation and SISJAC, in collaboration with the British Library and created with the support of the British Museum. Here is a short description of it from the BL website (<https://www.bl.uk/events/manga-symposium#>):

*What is Manga? Exploring Japanese manga and visual narratives.*

The Japanese and British governments are holding a 'Japan-UK Season of Culture 2019-20,' bridging the Rugby World Cup 2019 and the Olympic and Paralympic Games 2020. A number of events have been organised, with the *Citi exhibition Manga* at the British Museum (23 May – 26 August 2019) initiating the year-long celebration. The manga exhibition explores the growing appeal of this form in historical and social contexts, exploring its links to the past, revealing its present manifestations and exploring its trajectories into other related trajectories. The day-long workshop will coincide with the exhibition in its final days and provide an opportunity for participants to attend both the event and view the exhibition.

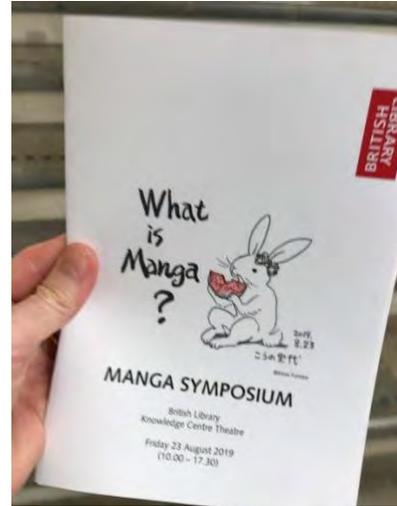
Manga, anime, and video games have gained a great deal of attention in Europe over recent years. And although manga has become a major global art form that is increasingly recognised outside of Japan, there has been a distinct East-West separation in the field of comic studies and related academic fields. This symposium will create a space for dialogue on manga in global context.

To address these interrelated issues in a fresh international context, this symposium brings together manga scholars, artists and industry affiliated members from Japan with international comics and manga scholars to engage in a productive dialogue to discuss definitions, reach and impact of manga in the round in a global context. The symposium should contribute towards an understanding of the reach and context of Japanese manga's influence not only on comic expression but also more widely on contemporary material culture.

Ron writes that he also spent some time in Malaysia, escorting a group of his students from Japan. In Kuala Lumpur, “I found by accident a government-sponsored museum set up by Malaysia’s cartoonists association, called the Malaysia Cartoon and Comics House which opened on 1 April 2017 (it seems that April 1st is cartoon day in Malaysia). Even though busy with preparations for a visit by Prime Minister, Dr. M. Mahathir, a few days later, the exhibition director, Tazidi, who is the lead cartoonist with Malaysia’s famous comic humour magazine *Gila Gila (Mad Mad)*, kindly showed me around for about two hours. It was great!”



British Museum Manga exhibition banner – it attracted approx. 180,000 visitors during its 3-month run



Manga Symposium program



Ronald Stewart presenting at the Manga Symposium



The Manga Symposium final roundtable discussion (R to L): Roger Sabin (University of London), Nicole Rousmaniere (British Museum Curator), Yoo Sookyoung and Ito Yu (Kyoto International Manga Museum conservator and curator), Simon Klingler (Museum Für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg, curator), Ronald Stewart



Malaysia Cartoon & Comic House



Cartoonist and exhibitions director Tazidi with Ron Stewart

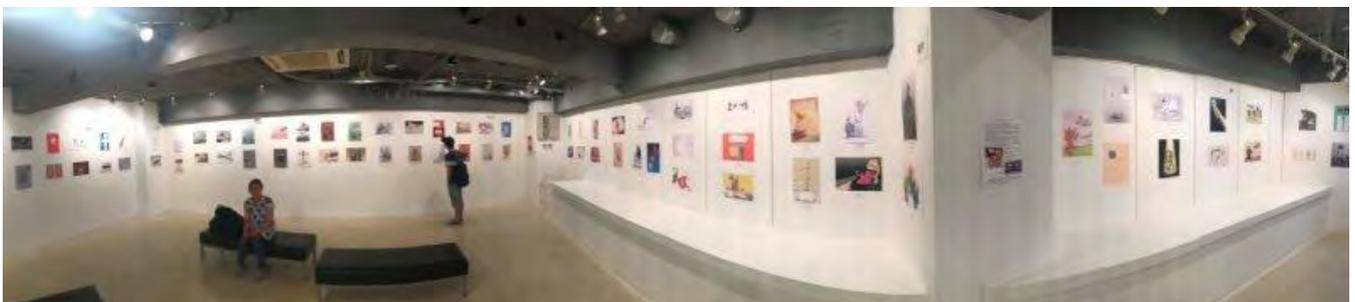


Tazidi guiding Ron Stewart around the museum.

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## **Members' News from No-rio, Professional Cartoonist, Japan**

In September 2019, the University of New Caledonia had the great pleasure and honour of welcoming Japanese cartoonist No-rio (whom many readers will remember from the 2019 conference in Melbourne and from the news items about his work in the September AHSN Digest). Also, a member of the NGO Cartooning for Peace, No-rio met with around 50 students enrolled in a course called "Semiotics of Image", who benefitted greatly from his vast knowledge and experience of newspaper cartooning (*Courrier International*, *Asahi NY Times*, UNESCO, Conférence Davos etc). Students learning Japanese were also invited to hear No-rio speak.



A panorama of the Tokyo cartoon exhibition (see next page for more details)

No-rio introduced the students to the fascinating world of political cartooning, discussing particular concepts such as freedom of expression and the different space afforded to cartoons depending on the countries, cultural values and/or current taboos. No-rio also showed how he as a cartoonist can deal with various international political topics from a distance through cartoons, illustrating to the students the power of images as a mode of expression and as a way of provoking critical reflection.

No-rio was in New Caledonia as a guest of the Forum Francophone du Pacifique (Pacific Francophone Forum) organised by the government in collaboration with CREIPAC French language school. He also gave two workshops for university students, one for high school students, and one for the general public. He met with a wonderful response is already invited back again.

No-rio has also assisted with a Tokyo cartoon exhibition organized by another AHSN member, Dr Yoshiaki Yokota, FECO/University of Tokyo, on the theme of “lack of freedom of expression”, and dedicated to a jailed Turkish cartoonist Musa Kart with a call for his release. Coincidentally, though more than just a pleasant complete surprise to Yoshiaki, less than 24 hours after the exhibition began, Kart was released after spending 142 days behind bars. About 100 cartoonists submitted work (most from the Middle East, Eastern Europe and China), and one section was devoted to the works by No-rio banned from publication. This exhibition comes on the heels of the controversial Aichi Triennale 2019 Art Exhibition entitled “After freedom of expression”. This was made up of artworks that were denied display (censored) at other exhibitions, and which was closed down within just two days after receiving numerous threats (mostly regarding one work to do with wartime “comfort women”). While Yoshiaki’s exhibition won’t be as controversial as that, it has drawn more attention than his one last year and already has a half-page write up in the *Tokyo Shinbun* newspaper. The exhibition has now moved to the Kyoto University of Art and Design.

*Ed: Congratulations to our colleagues in Japan on their high profile activities!*



Entrance panel to Yoshiaki Yokota’s international cartoon exhibition, “Wonderful? Wonder World 2019: What is free expression?” at Motoazabu Gallery, Tokyo (currently on display in Kyoto)



No-rio presents to his students in New Caledonia, July 2019

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## **Invitation from AHSN member, Jim Bridges and his colleague, Franz Kantor, at the Australian Cartoon Museum, Melbourne:**

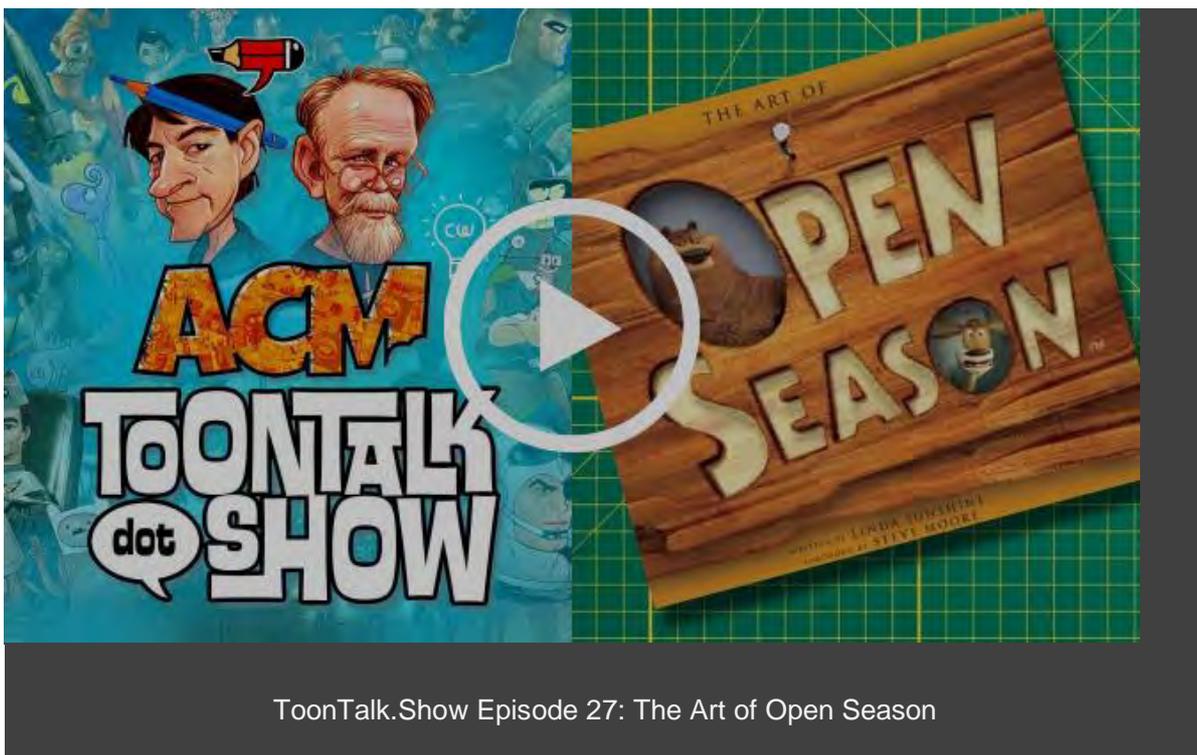
*Australian Cartoon Museum ToonTalk Show, Episode 27: The Art of Open Season*

*Reviewers: Frantz Kantor & Jim Bridges*

The Art of Open Season gives you an inside look at an explosion of color and talent, documenting every aspect of creating a CG animated film, from scripting and storyboarding to layout, animation, color, lighting, and visual effects with sensational full-color images throughout.

We would like to take this opportunity to ask you to subscribe to our YouTube channel. This doesn't cost you anything, but it will help us at the ACM to continue to make more films and YouTube will get behind us and promote our work if we get more subscribers. Follow the link below to Subscribe, click the Big Red Button on the Front Page To Subscribe

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ToonTalk.Show Episode 27: The Art of Open Season

Our mailing address is:  
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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SYDNEY**

**THE UNITED STATES  
STUDIES CENTRE**  
at the University of Sydney

# ICLS Research Seminar

## Co-hosted by

## United States Studies Centre



### Dr Frederik Byrn Køhlert

is a lecturer in Comics Studies and American Studies at the University of East Anglia. He is the author of *Serial Selves: Identity and Representation in Autobiographical Comics* (Rutgers University Press, 2019) and *The Chicago Literary Experience: Writing the City, 1893-1953* (University of Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2011). He is also the series editor of Routledge Focus on Gender, Sexuality, and Comics Studies, the editor of *A History of Chicago Literature* (forthcoming from Cambridge University Press), and the course director for the Master of Arts program in Comics Studies at the University of East Anglia.

### When

Thursday 2pm-4pm  
December 5, 2019  
SLC Common Room 536,  
Level 5, Brennan MacCallum  
Building A18

### For more information

Dr Benjamin Nickl, International  
Comparative Literature and  
Translation Studies

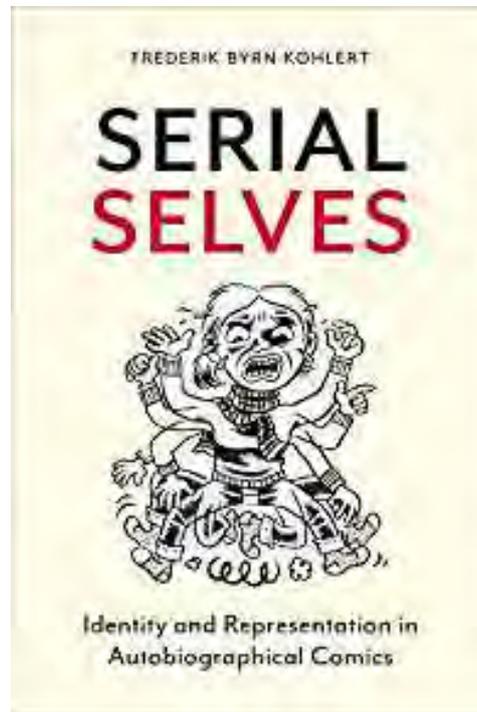
[benjamin.nickl@sydney.edu.au](mailto:benjamin.nickl@sydney.edu.au)

&

Dr Rodney Taveira, United  
States Studies Centre

[rodney.taveira@sydney.edu.au](mailto:rodney.taveira@sydney.edu.au)

CRICOS 00026A



## “A Grotesque, Incurable Disease”: Whiteness as Illness in Gabby Schulz’s *Sick*

### Abstract:

Graphic memoirs of illness and disability typically either insist on the representation of physical difference or work to make outwardly imperceptible ailments visible, both of which are strategies enabled by the comics form’s ability to depict subjective notions of bodies as well as mental states as drawings on the page. But what happens if such embodiment is bound up with bland but complicit racial whiteness—a color typically represented on the comics page as nothing more than an absence—as seen and experienced by the artist through the lens of debilitating bodily illness? In *Sick*, his 2016 memoir about suffering under a mysterious illness, Gabby Schulz (who is also known under the pen name of Ken Dahl, the author of *Monsters*) visually investigates the intersection of illness and whiteness in an America desperate to efface its own privilege. As fever wreaks havoc on his body, Schulz begins to see—and to visually depict—his entire existence as a ghost trying on a series of disguises intended to conceal what he calls the “psychic stillbirth” of being white in America—a perspective that allows him to understand, as he says, that “‘embracing my heritage’ is like covering myself in shit.” In this way, Schulz’s critique also comes to include not only the comics form itself, which has so often served to naturalize whiteness as the universal human category, but also the habitual neglect in comics scholarship to examine the racial implications of the white spaces on the page. A horror story with whiteness as its monster, *Sick* helps fill this scholarly gap through drawn depictions of white racial identity morphing into increasingly disturbing images of the death and destruction upon which it rests.

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## New Book

Bernard Schweizer. 2019. *Christianity and the Triumph of Humor: From Dante to David Javerbaum*. London: Routledge.

**Publisher's description:** This book presents a compelling argument about the centrality of humor to the story of Western Christianity's cultural and artistic development since the Middle Ages, taking a multi-disciplinary approach that combines literary criticism, religious studies, philosophy, theology, and social science.

After laying out the conceptual framework in Part 1, Part 2 analyzes key works of religious comedy across the ages from Dante to the present, and it samples the breadth of contemporary religious humor from Brad Stine to Robin Williams, and from Monty Python to South Park.

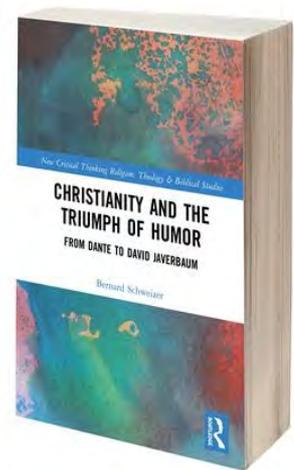
Using critical, historical, and conceptual lenses, the book exposes and overturns past attempts by church authorities, scholars, and commentators to limit and control laughter based on religious, ideological, or moral criteria.

This is a unique look into the role of humor and comedy around religion. It will, therefore, appeal to readers interested in multiple fields of inquiry, including religious studies, humor studies, the history of ideas, and comparative literature.

More information on the book is available at: <https://www.routledge.com/authors/i19107-bernard-schweizer>

About the author: Bernard Schweizer is Emeritus Professor of English at Long Island University NY, and is the founder of the Religion and Humor Network at: [https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/humour-religion/info;\\_ylc=X3oDMTJm](https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/humour-religion/info;_ylc=X3oDMTJm)

The author is offering AHSN readers a specially discounted price (\$US 25.00 plus overseas postage from the USA) for a limited number of copies of the book. Please email Dr Bernard Schweitzer at: [Bernard.Schweizer@liu.edu](mailto:Bernard.Schweizer@liu.edu) for full details.



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## The Humour Studies Digest

### The Australasian Humour Studies Network (AHSN)

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

Send newsletter submissions to our Co-Editors:

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