

Humour and Democracy



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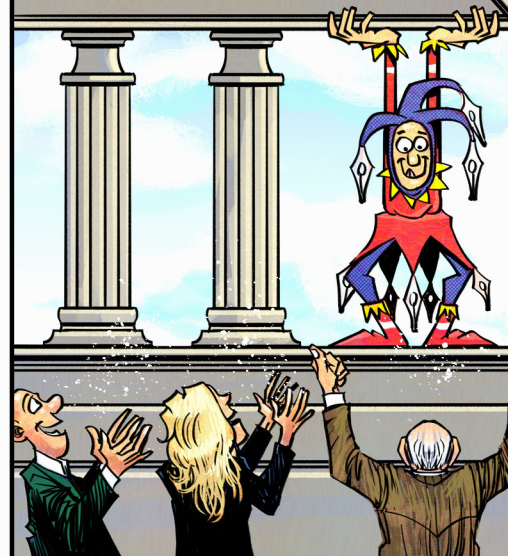
DELIAH
(DEMOCRATIC LITERACY
AND HUMOUR) STUDIES
THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN HUMOUR AND
DEMOCRACY.



TO DO THIS EFFECTIVELY,
WE NEED TO BUILD UPON
EXISTING RESEARCH. WHAT
DO WE ALREADY KNOW,
AND WHAT ARE THE GAPS
IN OUR KNOWLEDGE?



FOR A LONG TIME,
(POLITICAL) HUMOUR WAS
ONLY SEEN AS SOMETHING
TO CELEBRATE.



EVEN IN ITS
PROVOCATIVE OR
CONTROVERSIAL
FORMS, HUMOUR IS
INDEED A VITAL
INGREDIENT FOR A
HEALTHY
DEMOCRACY.

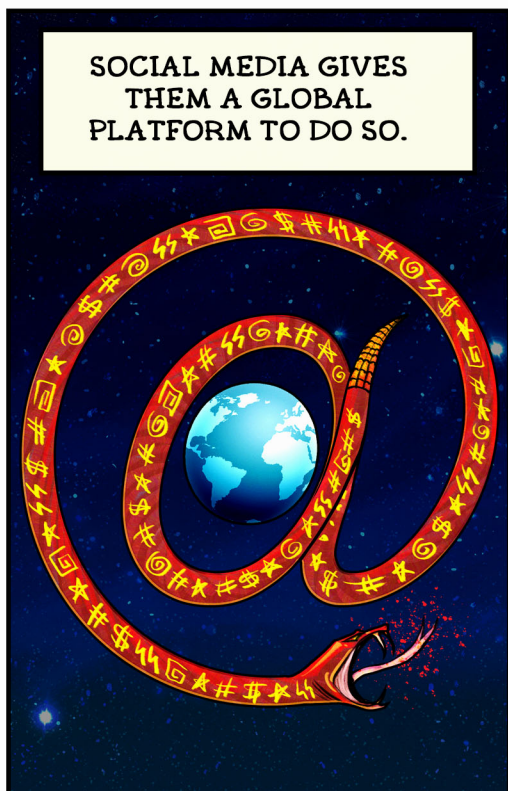
NOW, HOWEVER, THERE IS
ALSO A GROWING
RECOGNITION THAT HUMOUR
CAN SOMETIMES BE USED
IN A HARMFUL WAY.



THE INTERNET PLAYS A
CRUCIAL ROLE IN THIS.
SOME GROUPS USE
HUMOUR TO SPREAD
RACIST, MISOGYNISTIC AND
ANTI-DEMOCRATIC IDEAS.



SOCIAL MEDIA GIVES
THEM A GLOBAL
PLATFORM TO DO SO.



AUTHORITARIAN
LEADERS USE HUMOUR
TO BOLSTER THEIR
POPULARITY...



... AND BULLY THOSE
THEY DESPISE.

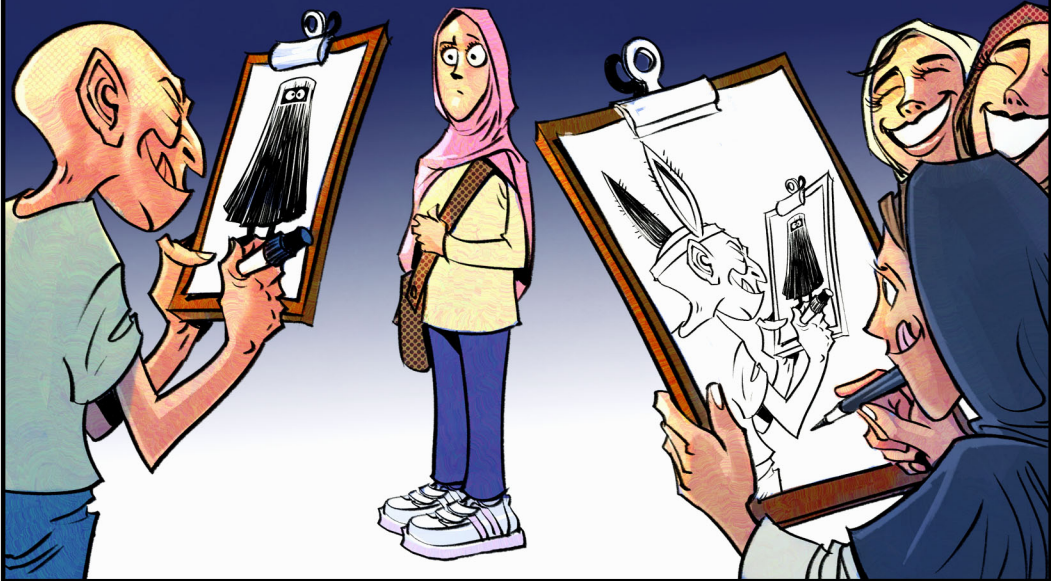


DELIAH'S RESEARCH
FOCUSES ON BOTH THE
POSITIVE AND THE
NEGATIVE SIDES OF
HUMOUR.



WE SEE HUMOUR AS A
MEANS OF COMMUNICATION.

FOR INSTANCE, HUMOUR CONTRIBUTES TO DEFINING SOCIAL
GROUPS. ETHNIC AND SEXIST JOKES OFTEN REPRODUCE
EXISTING PREJUDICES, BUT HUMOUR IS ALSO USED TO
CHALLENGE THEM.



HUMOUR IS OFTEN
SEEN AS A POWERFUL
MEDIUM TO TRANSMIT
POLITICAL INFORMATION.
BUT IS THIS TRUE?



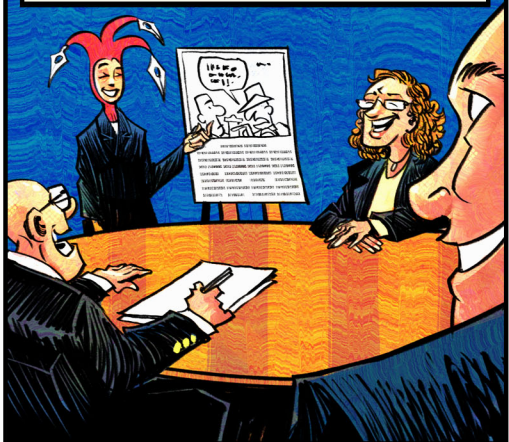
HUMOUR AROUND A CERTAIN
POLITICAL ISSUE USUALLY
APPEALS TO PEOPLE WHO ARE
ALREADY FAMILIAR
WITH IT...



... RATHER THAN SUCH
CONTENT ITSELF BEING
RESPONSIBLE FOR
INCREASED POLITICAL
KNOWLEDGE.



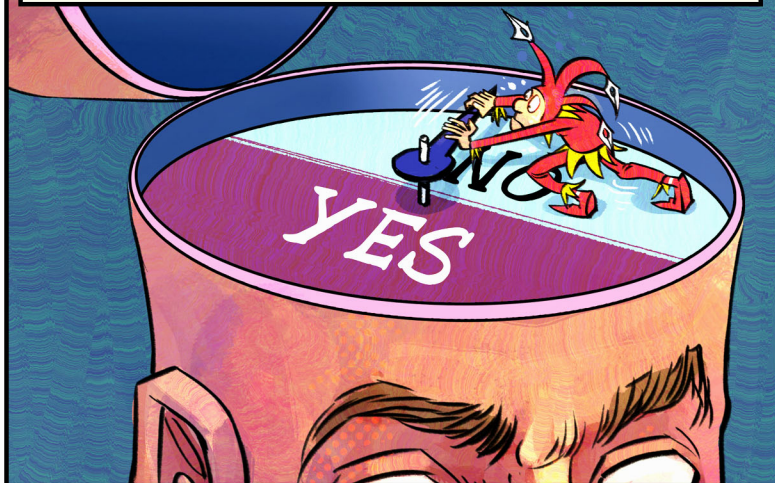
HUMOUR DOES HAVE THE
POWER TO SET THE AGENDA,
GIVING ATTENTION TO
CERTAIN TOPICS WITHIN
PUBLIC DEBATE,
STIMULATING PEOPLE TO
THINK ABOUT CERTAIN
SUBJECTS (AND NOT
OTHERS).



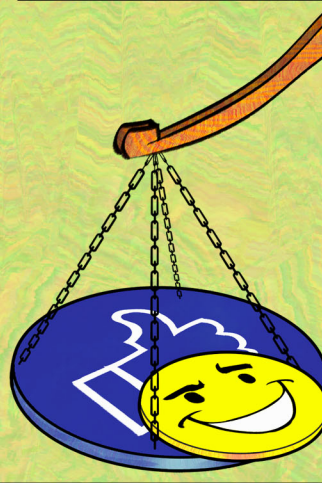
HUMOUR MAY SERVE AS A POINT OF ENTRY FOR THOSE
WITH MODERATE POLITICAL INTEREST, POTENTIALLY
ENCOURAGING DEEPER ENGAGEMENT OVER TIME.



THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT HUMOUR CAN ACTUALLY CHANGE SOMEONE'S MIND IF THEY ARE CLOSER TO EXTREMES.



BUT IF YOU ARE NEUTRAL OR MODERATE ABOUT A CERTAIN TOPIC, HUMOUR CAN SWAY YOU OR SOLIDIFY YOUR OPINION...

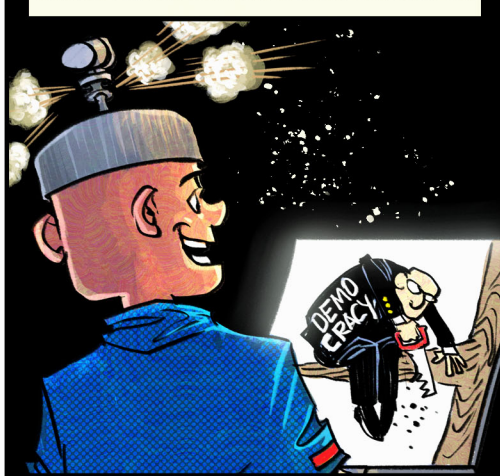


... HUMOUR HAS THE POWER TO LURE YOU FROM NEUTRAL GROUND INTO THE CAMP OF 'OPINIONATED' PEOPLE.

AN IMPORTANT FUNCTION OF HUMOUR IS THE EXPRESSION OF FEELINGS, SUCH AS ANGER AND FRUSTRATION, PROVIDING EMOTIONAL RELIEF.



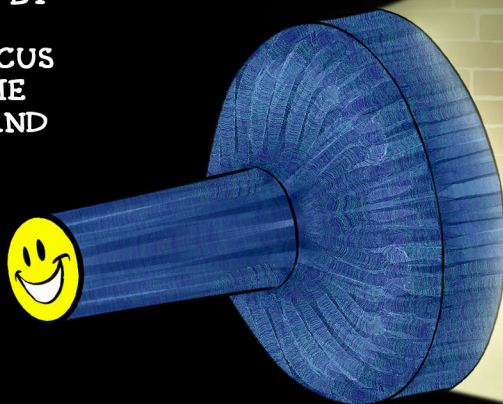
HOWEVER, A SIGNIFICANT PROPORTION OF THE HUMOROUS MESSAGES THAT CIRCULATE ONLINE EXPRESS EXCLUSIONARY AND ANTI-DEMOCRATIC ATTITUDES.



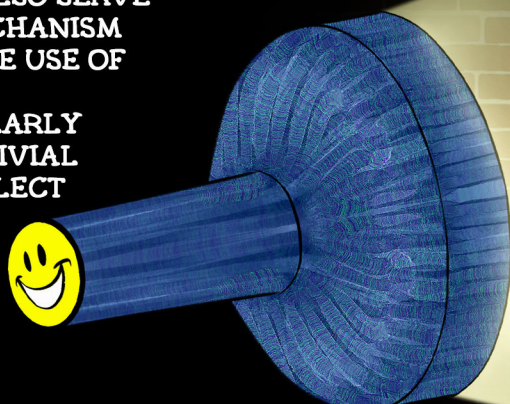
SOCIAL MOVEMENTS USE HUMOUR TO ATTRACT SOCIAL SUPPORT, TO DEFUSE TENSIONS AND TO MITIGATE HOSTILE RESPONSES (SOMETIMES BEFORE THEY HAPPEN).



HUMOUR EMPLOYED BY CITIZENS AND MASS MEDIA TENDS TO FOCUS ON SCRUTINIZING THE MORAL INTEGRITY AND CREDIBILITY OF ELECTED OFFICIALS.

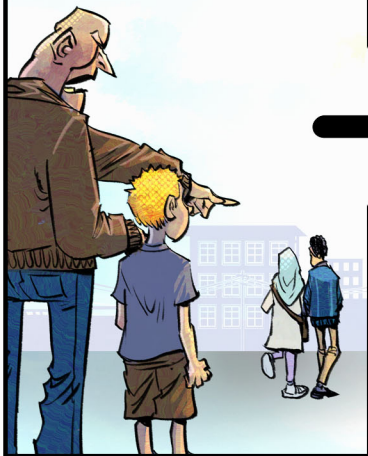


BUT HUMOUR CAN ALSO SERVE AS A DEFENSIVE MECHANISM FOR POLITICIANS. THE USE OF SELF-DEPRECATING HUMOUR—PARTICULARLY ABOUT MINOR OR TRIVIAL MATTERS—CAN DEFLECT SERIOUS SCRUTINY.



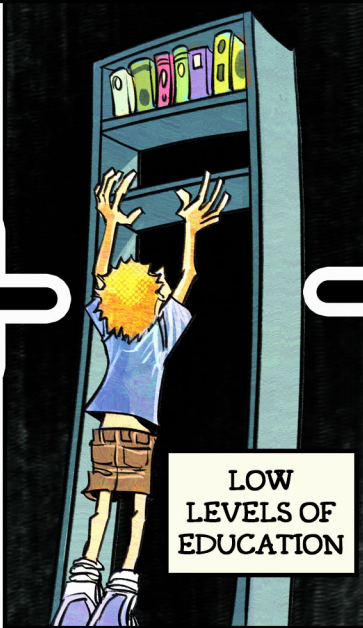
THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT THE APPRECIATION OF HUMOUR IS CORRELATED WITH PRE-EXISTING BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES. RACIST, SEXIST AND ETHNO-NATIONALIST HUMOUR IS LINKED TO LOW LEVELS OF EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL STAGNATION.

PRE-EXISTING
BELIEFS AND
ATTITUDES



+

LOW
LEVELS OF
EDUCATION



+

ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL
STAGNATION



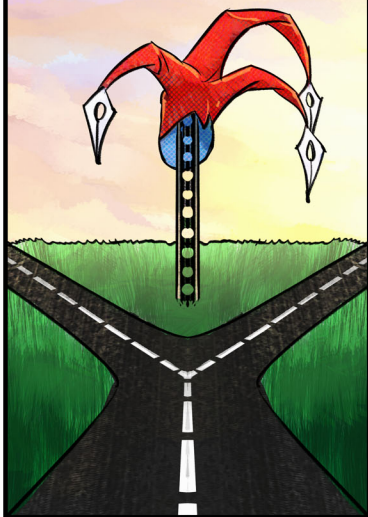
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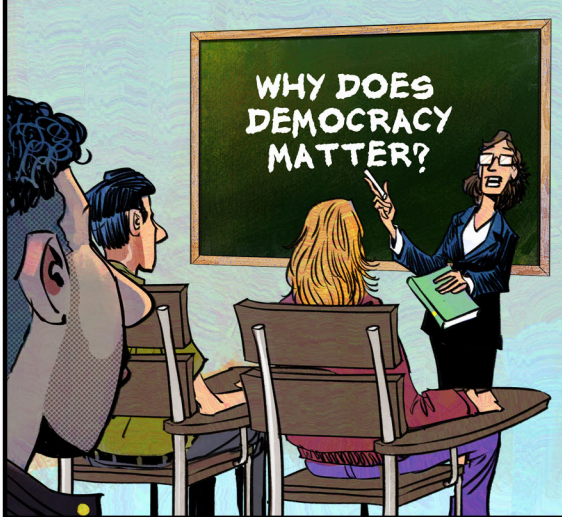
HUMOUR IS USED DIFFERENTLY BY POWERFUL GROUPS AND MARGINALISED GROUPS. MARGINALISED PEOPLE ARE OFTEN MORE AWARE OF WHEN JOKES HURT THEM. THEY ALSO USE SELF-DEPRECATION AS A WAY TO COPE, RESIST, AND TAKE BACK POWER. POWERFUL GROUPS, ON THE OTHER HAND, ARE MORE LIKELY TO DISMISS THE IMPACT OF HARMFUL HUMOUR AND TO ENGAGE IN HUMOUR THAT MOCKS OTHERS RATHER THAN THEMSELVES.



CURRENTLY, THERE
IS LITTLE
RESEARCH ON
STRATEGIES AIMED
AT ADDRESSING
HARMFUL FORMS
OF HUMOUR. WE
SEE TWO
APPROACHES.



THE FIRST CONSISTS OF
TARGETED INTERVENTIONS (FOR
INSTANCE AT SCHOOLS), LIKE
NON-JUDGMENTAL NARRATIVE
EXCHANGES AND THE USE OF
COUNTER-HUMOUR TO
CHALLENGE ANTIDEMOCRATIC
OR EXCLUSIONARY ATTITUDES.



RATHER THAN DIRECTLY
CONFRONTING HARMFUL
HUMOUR, WE CAN ALSO CREATE
NEW NARRATIVES THROUGH
WHICH INDIVIDUALS CAN
ARTICULATE THEIR DEMANDS
IN A LESS TOXIC MANNER.

