

Re-watching Dom Joly's infamous satirical take on the use of a mobile phone for Trigger Happy TV (where he would shout loudly into a mobile phone in inappropriate contexts), I was reminded of how the joke was so easily subsumed into the social psyche and spurred an irresistible desire to imitate his performance and re-live the joke. Humour, in its various guises and to varying levels of success, can act as a tool that simultaneously 'brings us together' whilst acting disruptively.

"If humour recalls us to *sensus communis*, then it does this by momentarily pulling us out of common sense, where jokes function as moments of *dissensus communis*"<sup>1</sup>

By exposing, denouncing or deriding existing social or cultural practices one can set up, as a comic technique, and an artistic one, a suspended moment of reversal. That fleeting moment allows for a refreshed viewing of the subject matter and an admittance of what we subconsciously bring into our lives.

We are all aware of the vociferous nature of technological progress and its constant injection into everyday practice. On the whole, we accept its intended function to make things 'easier', but we are not always aware of what we lose in the process of acceptance and utilisation (made more difficult by the dizzying abstraction, differentiation and over-hyped marketing of its associated commodities). It has undeniably allowed almost instantaneous communication over vast distances but to allow such speed there must be a lightening of the load, a 'throwing over the side' of any deadweight. The removal of physicality and the body, in all its heavy molecular complexity, is the easy answer in allowing succour with that super-fast broadband. But, the subtlety of communication therefore becomes lost when rendered in a browser and we are now in a position where 'text' or email can provide a dressing screen to hide the bashful modesty of speech acts.

Monty Python once did a sketch titled "The Semaphore version of Wuthering Heights", concluding with faux-adverts for the next in the series, "Julius Cesar on an Aldis Lamp" and "Gunfight at the OK Coral in Morse Code". Their parodies humorously pulled-apart the removal of speech with a clunky, alternative communication device. In that moment of contextual reversal, we see the subtlety of the original dialogue and narrative being replaced by a formulaic method of signs and signals. It is this loss of complex inter-relations that reminds me of the unintended confusion and offence I once caused when attempting to write sarcasm in the format of an email. It seems, unfortunately, that the humanistic elements of my jovial approach were lost in translation.

---

<sup>1</sup> On Humour, Simon Critchley (London: Routledge, 2002) p.18