Running Head: COOKIE INCIDENT

Remix in the Stephen Duckett Cookie Incident

By

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Contents

Abstract .... p. 4

Introduction .... p. 5

Exhibit 1: The Parent Video .... p. 8

First Meditation: The Ridiculous .... p. 14

Exhibit 2: The Ridiculous is Arresting .... p. 15

Second Meditation: The Incongruous .... p. 30

Exhibit 3: Goodbye, Goodbye Unpacked .... p. 54

Third Meditation: More Incongruousness .... p. 64

Exhibit 4: The Cleaver's Touch .... p. 76

Fourth Meditation: Sharing .... p. 81

Fifth Meditation: The Art of rmthespian .... p. 95

Conclusion .... p. 126

References .... p. 131

Appendix: Interview With Robert McKoen .... p. 134

Abstract

On November 19, 2010, Stephen Duckett, who was then the President and CEO of Alberta Health Services, was questioned by conventional news reporters as he left a meeting of provincial health officials. Infamously, Duckett shook off the questions, repeating with word and gesture that he was eating a cookie. That recorded encounter sparked political debate, leading to Duckett's ouster, but not before it was used as raw material by a relatively new kind of participant in the political square: the video remix artist.

In the study that follows, which issues from the cultural studies field, we unpack two of those remixes, the work of online remix artist rmthespian, finding in them contemporary evidence of the tradition of using humour and ridicule to communicate a political viewpoint that, and—this is what is new—a viewpoint supercharged in its ability to be viewed by the affordances of online sharing technology. The study also includes an interview with the remix artist, which provides source material for future study.

Introduction

In the pages that follow, I try to think about three pieces of video on the YouTube social video streaming and sharing platform. The first is titled “Stephen Duckett’s ‘Cookie Exchange’ with Edmonton media.” Cookie Exchange is an unedited piece of video posted by CTV News Edmonton on November 19, 2010, that runs for 2 minutes and 13 seconds. As of this writing, it has attracted 360,500 views. In it, then-Alberta Health Services (AHS) president and CEO Stephen Duckett is seen and heard being asked questions as he leaves a meeting of provincial health care officials who had spent the day at the Matrix Hotel in downtown Edmonton forging the shape of updated hospital emergency room care protocols. In the video, Duckett is asked by conventional media reporters if he would stop to answer questions. Unexpectedly, he refuses; or, rather, he refuses in an unexpected manner, repeating that he was eating a cookie. And then debating with reporters whether it was more ridiculous that he was eating a cookie or that reporters wanted to talk to him then and there instead of waiting to question a lesser official at a scheduled news conference. Five days after the video was posted, Duckett was fired. The premier of the province said he thought “everyone in Alberta watched and saw the offensive comments,” later observing Cookie Exchange went “viral in social media, not only in Alberta but around the world.” The AHS board chair said Duckett’s ability to lead had been compromised by the so-called cookie incident.

The other pieces of video under review are examples of the user-generated combination “of two or more pre-existing videos and/or audio sources into a new derivative work” that are called remixes (Edwards & Tryon, 2009, p.1). The first is titled “C is for cookie–Dr. Stephen Duckett. Mash up with the Cookie Monster/Duckett,” which is shortened to C Is For Cookie in this analysis. The second is “Goodbye Goodbye Dr. Duckett–The cookie has crumbled!” which will be referred to as Goodbye, Goodbye in the pages below. Each remix is the work of professional videographer and editor Robert McKeon of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, who is known online and in the YouTube community as rmthespian. Each remix video is a digitally edited recombination of video and audio from Cookie Exchange with video and audio from other sources, including the children’s educational television program *Sesame Street* and featuring one if its most popular characters, the Muppet known for his insatiable appetite for cookies, the Cookie Monster. Together, the two remixes have drawn 175,194 YouTube views. In private correspondence, media and communications scholar Henry Jenkins called Cookie Exchange and the remixes “a really great example of grassroots use of the media in ways which are hard to imagine in a broadcast-only culture,” going on to observe that “I have to say the actual ‘cookie interview’ footage is nothing short of astonishing.” Of the three pieces of video before us, new media scholar David Michael Gurney says in private correspondence that “it really is one of those cases where a kernel of the incongruity in that initial clip (his cheerily melodic and repetitive use of the word ‘cookie’) gets plucked out and recombined marvelously by some astute viewers.”

And, so, whether from the perspective of the politician or the bureaucrat or the academic researcher, there is much to consider in Cookie Exchange and the two of its remix offspring from rmthespian. In thinking about these video artifacts and trying to locate their significance, I inherit a humanist perspective from the cultural studies field. Of cultural studies, Michael Pickering says its philosophy is “pluralist in that it advocates using mixed methods, taking an eclectic approach to research topics rather than confining research activity to any single avenue of investigation. The virtue of this is that the strengths of one method may help overcome the limitations of another, while using two or more methods in any specific research project will help to build up a richer data set" (2008, p. 4). The cultural studies point of view felt most comforting as a home for the vague question that issued the mediations that follow. And that question was: How are Cookie Exchange, C Is For Cookie and Goodbye, Goodbye constructed to communicate with us, and what do they communicate? Uncovering those answers turned out to be a tricky process. And I do not pretend to have come close at succeeding. What I hope will emerge, though, is a richer appreciation for the remix artist and how his participation in wit and incongruity naturally gathers an audience for his work—an audience that responds to a visual presentation of the humorous and the ridiculous—that is supercharged in its effect by the power of technological sharing. Through this, the remix artist begins to be revealed as a somewhat new and certainly shrewd actor in the online political square who is keen about the tools at his disposal. What remains for further analysis are questions about the deeper and enduring significance of the remix artist joining the mix of the art of political communication and the grammar of power that underlies it.

Exhibit 1

The Parent Video: Cookie Exchange

Before the remix was the parent video, Cookie Exchange. The one-shot video follows Duckett and reporters from the second floor of the Matrix Hotel, down a flight of stairs, out the front door, along the sidewalk of 107 St. in downtown Edmonton, across the street, along the opposite sidewalk and ends at the doors of Duckett's destination, the AHS main office. Seen and/or heard in the video are Duckett, an unidentified colleague, CTV Edmonton reporter Laura Tupper, *Calgary Herald* reporter Renata d'Aliesio, CBC Radio reporter John Archer, CBC TV reporter Briar Stewart and an unidentified CBC TV cameraman. The point of view in Cookie Exchange is provided by the CTV Edmonton cameraperson assigned to reporter Tupper.

Laura Tupper, CTV Edmonton: Excuse me, Mr. Duckett, do you mind just taking a few minutes with me to answer some questions?

Duckett: [laughs, indistinguishable] mmm mmm…not, not while I'm eating…

Duckett associate: sorry, we've got another meeting to go to…

Tupper: I think people do want to hear directly from you, though. Is there a chance that you could just speak with us, just for a second?

Duckett: (gestures with cookie toward Tupper's face)

Tupper: …don't want a cookie.

Indistinguishable voice: No, we got an appointment to go to.

Renata d'Aliesio, *Calgary Herald*: What do you think of Raj Sherman's criticism of AHS, and criticizing that…you're making, have been making knucklehead decisions…

Indistinguishable voice: Go ahead, Jay.

Indistinguishable voice: Sorry.

D'Aliesio: Don't you think Albertans want to hear what you have to say, Dr. Duckett?

Duckett: I'm eating a cookie.

[laughter]

D'Aliesio: Well, we'll wait for you to finish.

Tupper: Do you have a response to some of the criticism that MLAs are directing directly at Alberta Health Services?

Duckett: I'm still eating my cookie.

Indistinguishable voice: Okay.

Tupper: Okay, we'll give you a second.

Voice: We've got a meeting…see…soon.

D'Aliesio: Dr. Duckett, can you explain why you won't stop and talk?

Duckett: I'm eating my cookie.

Tupper: We can wait. We don't mind waiting. Just for a minute. Just to take a que-. I think people are interested in hearing from you.

Duckett: I'm interested in eating my cookie.

John Archer, CBC Radio: Isn't it rather ridiculous that you're talking about eating a cookie when the associate minister is talking about a cri-?

Duckett: Let me say this to you. We have issued a media advisory which says the media is available to talk in about 30 minutes. Isn't it ridiculous that the media are not prepared to go to the media scrum? And I'm eating my cookie.

Tupper: But I think people are interested in hearing from you as the head of Alberta Health Services.

Voice: Right this way.

Duckett: We're gonna cross the road.

Tupper: Is this a problem that can be fixed in four years, sir, do you think?

Duckett: Have you heard my answer? [indistinguishable]

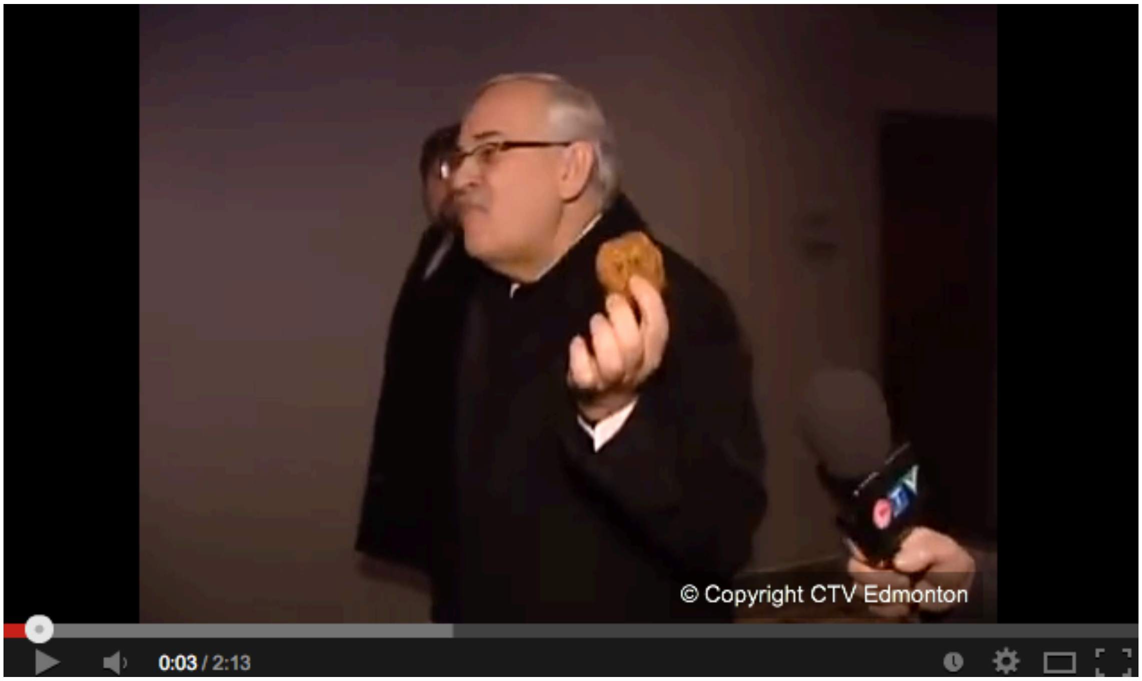
Tupper: But I think people want to hear from you. Is it acceptable that they're having to wait four years?

Duckett: Did you hear what I just said? I said I'm eating my cookie.

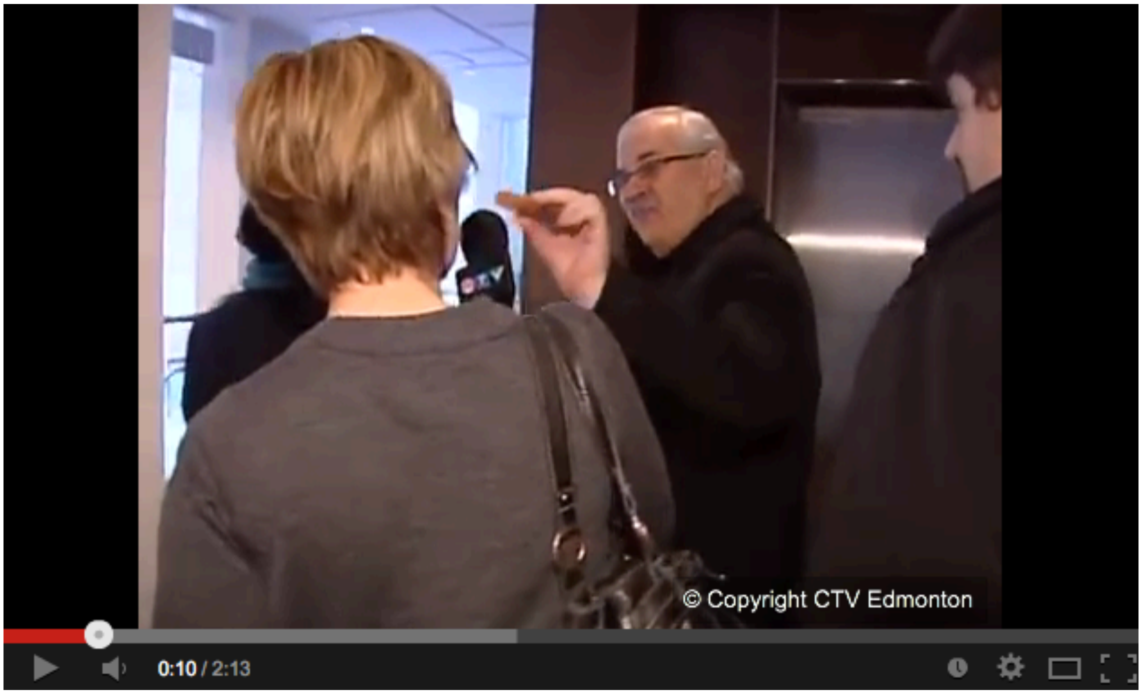
D'Aliesio: Why is that the image you are wanting to portray to Albertans, that you are eating a cookie? These are serious problems that have been talked about, and raised…

Duckett [walks into AHS headquarters]

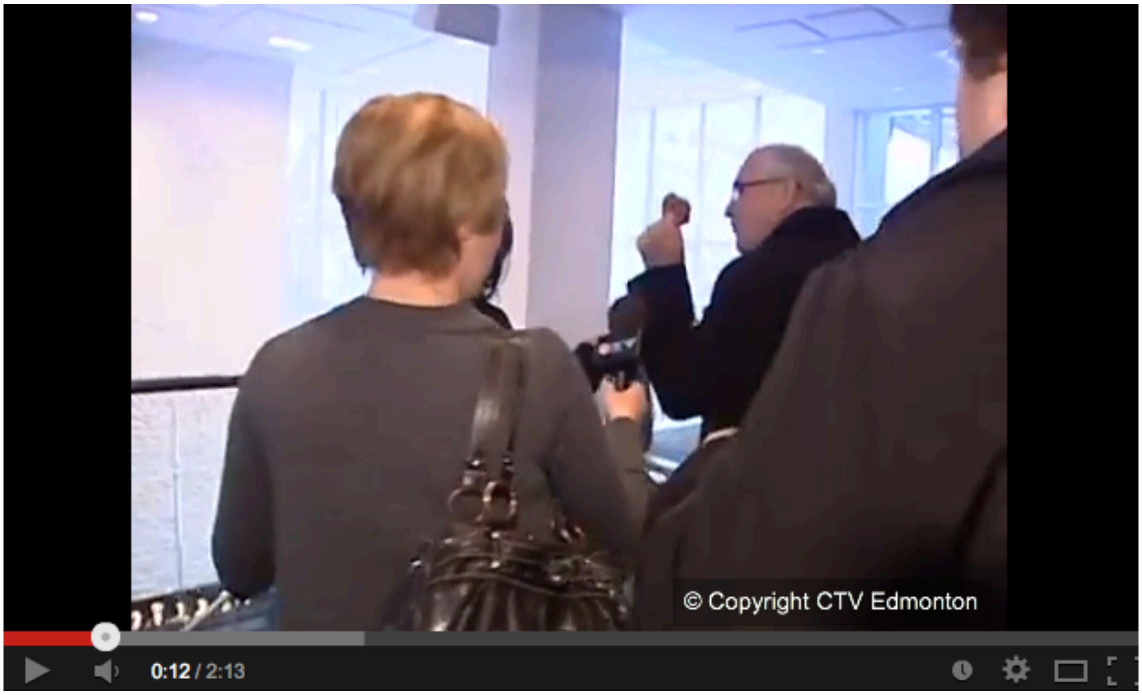
Archer: Hope it was a good cookie.


© Copyright CTV Edmonton
0:03 / 2:13

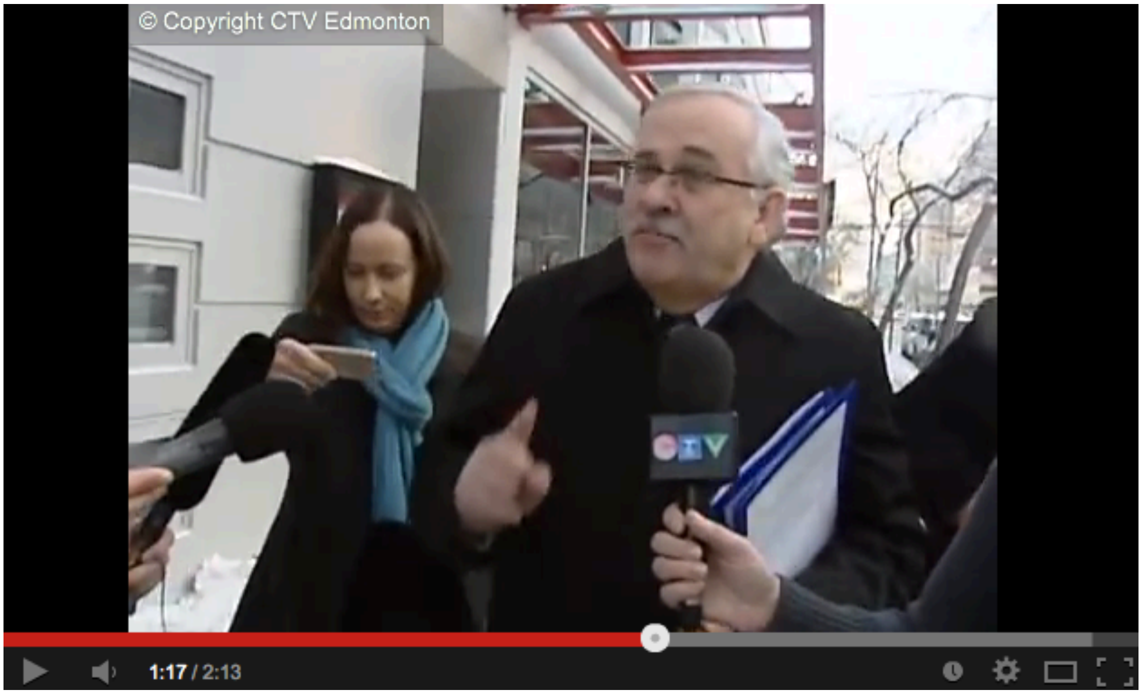
(Duckett first gestures with cookie at 0:03 mark of Cookie Exchange)


© Copyright CTV Edmonton
0:10 / 2:13

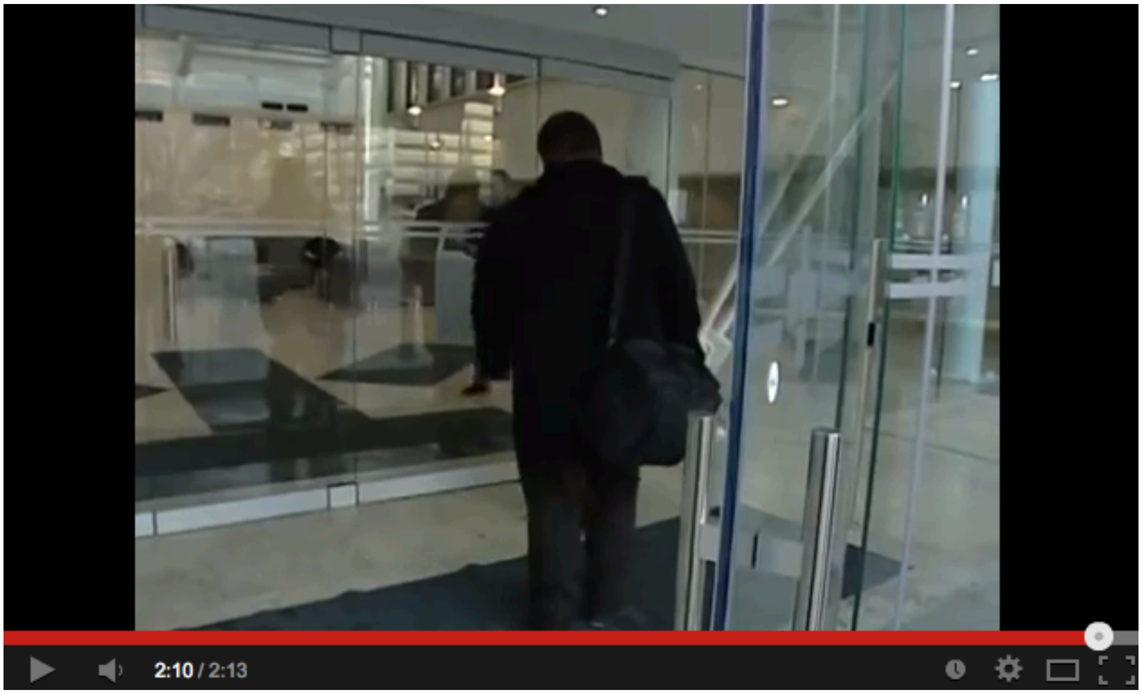
(Duckett's second gesture at 0:10 mark)


© Copyright CTV Edmonton
0:12 / 2:13

(Third gesture at 0:12 mark)


© Copyright CTV Edmonton
CTV
1:17 / 2:13

(Duckett suggests media ridiculous at 1:17)



(Duckett image reflected in AHS front door at 2:10)

First Meditation: The Ridiculous

There is much that is or borders on the ridiculous in Cookie Exchange. There is the sight and sound of a top health care bureaucrat eating in front of others and then citing the childhood lesson to not talk while one's mouth is full as his reason for not stopping to answer reporters' questions. There is Duckett's unwitting echoing of a beloved Muppet's signature text and baked-good prop in that refusal to stop and talk. There is the moment at 0:46 of the video where Duckett's associate gently directs one of the media corps into a tree. Then there is the spectacle of Duckett at 1:25 narrating his own movement, telling reporters, like a parent, that "we're gonna cross the road"–and then jaywalking, the reporters following along dutifully. Some who experienced the video on YouTube left comments foregrounding the ridiculousness of Duckett. In this vein, manchen57 commented that "This Clown Needs His Ass Fired Immediately," and ritalica said "It always makes me feel good about my character when I see Adults acting like children, except when they are in positions of power," and YouTube user trent1280 added that "This is a very foolish doctor. Canadians take health care VERY seriously. This idiotic reply has cost him his job." Others found that the foolishness resided in the media question-askers. In this camp is blastmir, who said, "His only mistake (here) is allowing those media hound dogs get to him emotionally. The media has developed a sense of entitlement to instant access to anyone and everyone…None of this is too far from the way Fox News does things." This sentiment is picked up by other commenters, including Nixitur, who said, "I really don't know anything about this guy, but the interviewers are the ones behaving like jackasses here." In her analysis of the video, *Edmonton Journal* columnist Paula Simons drew attention to Duckett's perceived negative attitude about women (evidenced by his stopping and engaging only when asked a question by a male reporter), but then proceeded to get to her real point, which was to portion out degrees of ridiculousness, some for Duckett, more for those who would use Duckett's behaviour as a reason for his ouster. "But as *ridiculous* [emphasis added] as the video makes Duckett look, it's even more *ridiculous* [emphasis added] for opposition parties and lobby groups to call for his resignation, based on this. If being rude to reporters were a firing offence, we'd have precious few public officials left in this province." Ridicule—meaning derision or mockery, a transitive verb meaning to make fun of, subject to ridicule, laugh at, from the French or from Latin *ridiculum*, neuter of *ridiculus* meaning laughable, from ridērē, meaning laugh—is, seemingly, a precious resource when trying to make one's point in the public square. The Cookie Exchange video makes this point vividly. Here, in Exhibit 2, are the time-coded questions asked of Duckett and, in parentheses, his observed reactions.

Exhibit 2

The Ridiculous is Arresting

Question #1: 0:01/Tupper, CTV Edmonton/Do you mind just taking a few minutes with me to answer some questions? (walks by, motions with cookie)

Question #2 0:08/Tupper/Is there a chance that you could just speak with us, just for a second? (keeps walking, motions with cookie into face of reporter)

Question #3 0:15/D'Aliesio, Calgary Herald/What do you think of Raj Sherman's criticism of AHS, and criticizing that…you're making, have been making knucklehead decisions…? (walks down stairs, chews cookie)

Question #4 0:24/D'Aliesio/Don't you think Albertans want to hear what you have to say, Dr. Duckett? (walks, motions with cookie)

Question #5 0:31/Tupper/Do you have a response to some of the criticism that MLAs are directing directly at Alberta Health Services? (walks on, says he is eating his cookie)

Question #6 0:47/D'Aliesio/Dr. Duckett, can you explain why you won't stop and talk? (walks, says he is eating a cookie)

Question #7 0:52/Tupper/We can wait. We don't mind waiting. Is there any way? Just for a minute? Just to take a que-? (walkin, chewing cookie, holding cookie, says he's interested in eating his cookie)

Question #8 1:01/Archer, CBC Radio/Isn't it rather ridiculous that you're talking about eating a cookie when the associate minister is talking about a cri-? (*stops walking momentarily*, addresses media scrum, asks question, starts walking, criticizes reporters, says he is eating his cookie)

Question #9 1:31/Tupper/Is this a problem that can be fixed in four years, sir, do you think? (walks, chews cookie, asks reporter if she heard what he had just said)

Question #10 1:42/Tupper/Is it acceptable that they're having to wait four years? (walks, holds cookie, asks reporter if she has heard what he just said, repeats he is eating his cookie)

Question #11 1:50/D'Aliesio/Why is that the image you are wanting to portray to Albertans, that you are eating a cookie? (walks, does not engage)

It was one particular question that got Duckett to stop and, however briefly, to engage meaningfully with his interrogators. Admittedly, the question is also the only one posed by a fellow male, and, so, the Simons contention cannot be dismissed, but it is worth considering not just the gender of the question-asker but the question from the question asker, and in how it differed from the questions that failed to get Duckett to stop. In this we are led by Cookie Monster who, in a memorable aphorism in the Socratic tradition, often says "questions is a good way to find out about things." When we ask questions about those questions, the answer points toward this concept of ridicule.

Of the 11 questions directed at Duckett by reporters, four (questions 1, 2, 6, 7) are simple invitations to take part in a conversation, three (questions 3, 4, 5) are questions that use what others are saying or purportedly thinking to entice a comment, two (questions 9, 10) hinge on the appropriateness of public-record timelines to improve emergency room protocols to elicit a comment, and two (questions 8, 11) involve an opinion or an evaluation from the reporter about why Duckett does not stop to answer questions. Of these latter two, only one (question 8) succeeds at all, and, admittedly, only briefly, in getting the cookie-eating, cookie-chewing, cookie-thrusting, Duckett to stop his walking and engage verbally with his interlocutors. Again, this was that unique question: "Isn't it rather ridiculous that you're talking about eating a cookie when the associate minister is talking about a cri-?" Short of asking and getting an honest response from Duckett himself, there is no water-tight answer to the question why that particular question caused him to stop and answer and enter into a brief dialogue with reporters. We contend, though, that the best clue to Duckett's thinking at that moment is the word ridiculous. That is the word used by reporter Archer that is repeated by CEO Duckett when he retorts, in a question of his own, at the centrepoint of the video: Isn't it ridiculous that the media are not prepared to go to the media scrum? Now we have a clash. Now the debate is joined. And at stake, it appears, is what is ridiculous. Curiously, the reporter and the bureaucrat do not agree on what is or whose actions are ridiculous, but they seem to be united on the idea or the feeling that the ridiculous seriously matters.

And they would be right. Ridicule is serious business in our time, a trend seen most clearly in the figure of *The Daily Show*'s Jon Stewart. *The Daily Show*, the longest-running program on the Comedy Central cable channel, presents itself as a fake television news show, with Stewart cast in the role of main anchor. Stewart reviews current real-world news headlines, offering satirical commentary on the hypocrisy and purported ridiculousness of politicians and policy makers. A Google search of "Jon Stewart" and "ridicule" backs up the characterization.

- Watch The Daily Show ridicule Republican cynicism on immigration
- Jon Stewart ridicules Fox News' pathetic defense of Chris Christie…
- Watch Jon Stewart Ridicule The War On Christmas On "The Daily…
- Video: Jon Stewart ridicules Rob Ford - The Globe and Mail

The show and its servings of ridicule continue to be popular, drawing a large portion of its audience from the coveted 18-49 age demographic. According to the Pew Research Center, a large majority of those who say they regularly watch *The Daily Show* (74 per cent) are younger than age 50; 55 per cent of the American public is in that coveted age range. When asked what they mostly seek when turning to Stewart's show, and given the options of latest headlines, in-depth reporting, views and opinions, and entertainment, 43 per cent of regular *The Daily Show* viewers said it was entertainment they sought. Only the *Colbert Report*, an equally successful spinoff of *The Daily Show*, attracted more of its viewers (53 per cent) by the promise of entertainment ("Americans spending more time").

Jon Stewart is a bit of a primetime boon for the academic commentators on pop culture, with those who toss either bouquets or bricks his way. In the former camp, Dias da Silva and Garcia (2012) position Stewart and Colbert as parodists, recalling from Gray, Jones and Thompson that "parody aims to provoke reflection and re-evaluation of how the targeted texts or genre works," (p. 93), asserting along with Druick that these television shows are examples of satirical parodies that indicate "skepticism about the news proper and the authority it channels and supports" (p. 93). In the latter camp are Hart and Hartelius, who find in Stewart not the salutary effects of the skeptic, but the poisonous bite of the cynic. "Jon Stewart is a multi-mediated reincarnation of the classical Cynic" (2007, p. 264), they write. "Just as the Cynics' agenda was to ridicule social and political norms by violating them in the most physically grotesque ways, Stewart foregrounds and mocks the generic conventions of his times" (p. 264). Skeptic or cynic, Stewart, having won 18 Primetime Emmy awards, delivers entertaining television. And, in so, fulfills Postman's prime directive about the medium. Writing in 1983, two years before publication of his influential book, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, the-then professor of education in the Department of Communication Arts and Science at New York University put it this way: "Partly because of its nondiscursive form, and partly because of its economic imperatives, and partly because it is unable to differentiate among its audiences, television considers unsuitable that which is not entertaining—which is another way of saying that television is an attention-centred curriculum. It has no purpose that takes precedence over keeping the attention of its student-viewers" (p. 313). Jon Stewart and his late-night-talk-show progeny have paid heed to Postman's assessment of their medium and have reliably served up entertaining fare—at the core of which is ridicule. In their verbal joust in Cookie Exchange to claim the power to assign ridiculousness, Duckett and Archer were participants, it seems, in a very contemporary endeavour.

Gennaro (2005) says his examination of humour of politics shows that "the most common weapon…is ridicule. The authority figure is exposed for what he really is behind his public mask, and his hypocrisy or social inadequacy is held up for all to see and to laugh at. Here is where humor normally plays its most important role in the comedy, as a social corrective" (n.p.). Gennaro is speaking specifically about the equation employed by Jon Stewart and *The Daily Show*, but it is certainly transferable to *The Colbert Report*, and to late-night talk shows, including *The Late Show, The Tonight Show*, the former *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon, Jimmy Kimmel Live* and even segments of purportedly hard news televisual presentations, such as CNN's Anderson Cooper's use of The RidicuList feature, in which the news anchor turns news commentator by, in his case, gently but gravely mocking subjects in the news. For his part, English comedian Ricky Gervais has taken up the banner of ridicule with conscious gusto, devoting territory on his Twitter feed not only to ridicule but to defending the practice. On April 23, 2013, Gervais tweeted this retweet invitation: "RT if you think it's OK to ridicule the belief that prayer can save a dying child as effectively as medicine," and received, as of this writing, 6,616 retweets and 680 favourites. On May 24, 2013, Gervais again used his Twitter feed to justify his position on ridicule, laying out the equation this way: "Ridiculous ideas deserve ridicule. Nothing is sacred. State your beliefs & don't cause physical harm.

Block. Unfollow. Be free. Speak up.” And then in October of 2013, there was this question and self-answer on Gervais’s Twitter feed: “What started this myth that you can criticise and ridicule all ideas–political, artistic, academic,–but not religious? Nonsense I say.”

And this claim of nonsense is powerful, because, like other evaluative devices used in communication, it can attract an audience. Sociolinguist William Labov explained evaluative devices this way. They “say to us: this was terrifying, dangerous, weird, wild, crazy, or amusing, hilarious and wonderful; more generally, that it was strange, uncommon, or unusual—that is, worth reporting” (cited in Pratt, 1977, p. 47). Admittedly, Labov does not include the term “ridiculous” in his list of what makes an event worth reporting or telling, but the words in its synonymic pool, including amusing, hilarious, weird, and crazy, point in its direction.

Labov created a typology of evaluative devices, and it is interesting to apply those concepts to the ridiculousness debate between Duckett and Archer in Cookie Exchange. In this, we are led by a student of Labov, Pratt, whose chapter on natural narrative written in 1977 as part of the book *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse*, presciently provides a toolkit of concepts to apply to Duckett. Evaluative commentary, Pratt says of Labov’s first evaluative device, “is where the narrator interrupts the progress of the narrative with a statement reaffirming the tellability of the story or assessing the situation” (pp. 47-48). This evaluative commentary itself divides into external and internal categories, the former being of most relevance to our present inquiry. External evaluative commentary, says Pratt, is where “the narrator himself asserts the point of the story as in statements like ‘it was quite an experience’ or ‘it was the strangest feeling’ and so on" (p. 48). This explanation provides a portal back into the significance of the CBC reporter John Archer's question: "Isn't it rather ridiculous that you're talking about eating a cookie when the associate minister is talking about a cri-?"—at the 1:01 mark of Cookie Exchange. For, here, Archer indeed interrupts the flow of the questions launched by fellow reporters in a bid to convince Duckett to stop and be interviewed, assumes the role of narrator and pronounces with the word ridiculous the importance of the encounter. From Archer's point of view, the encounter has become tellable, even though, from another point of view, the lack of answers from Duckett might qualify it only as so much raw video.

Besides external evaluative commentary, Labov also identifies sentence-internal evaluation devices, and, again, there are two varieties: intensifiers and comparators. In the explication of these evaluation devices, Pratt (1977) speaks in the context of the written word, but the basic point is undisturbed when transferred to the video realm. Intensifiers "are devices superimposed or added onto the basic narrative syntax without affecting the unmarked (simple past) form of the narrative verb phrase" (p. 48). Examples of sentence-internal evaluation devices are gestures, expressive phonology, repetition, and ritual interjections. And just as Archer deals in external evaluative commentary in his lunge at establishing the ridiculous, Duckett parries with internal techniques. He gestures, waving his finger continuously as he says, "We have issued a media advisory which says the media is available to talk in about 30 minutes. Isn't it ridiculous that the media are not prepared to go to the media scrum?" Duckett also employees expressive phonology, lengthening the vowels of "coookie." As well, he uses repetition, not only in the eating-my-cookie chorus, but by catching Archer's "ridiculous" and pronouncing it himself, turning it back on the reporters and his read of their actions. Duckett also girds his case that not he but they are ridiculous by repeating four times the word “media,” when he asks, somewhat rhetorically, “We have issued a *media* advisory which says the *media* is available to talk in about 30 minutes. Isn’t it ridiculous that the *media* are not prepared to go to the *media* scrum?” [emphases added]. And, true to Labov’s form, Duckett uses the ritual interjection, “Now, let me tell this to you” to introduce his turn toward serious debate. Duckett also defends his interpretation of where the ridiculousness resides by using what Labov calls comparators. “These are devices,” Pratt writes, “which involve the use of some verb phrase construction other than the simple past of the narrative clause. They include negatives, futures, modals, questions, commands, comparatives, and others” (p. 49). Pratt continues: “The Comparators do so by referring to hypothetical events that are then compared to observed events.” This theoretical construction nicely captures what Duckett is doing when he stops uttering simple descriptions of his actions such as “I’m eating a cookie,” “I’m still eating my cookie,” “I’m interested in eating my cookie,” and, “And I’m eating my cookie,” and, instead, asks a question using a negative; that is, he talks about what didn’t happen but could have if, the reporters are asked in person and the Cookie Exchange viewers asked on video, the supposed ridiculousness of the media corps’ following him didn’t occur.

This detailed detour through the thought of Labov and Pratt, and before that, through Ricky Gervais and those academic commentators who locate ridicule at the centre of contemporary humour, has been a convoluted answer to the question: why did Stephen Duckett stop to answer only one question? In tentatively answering that question, it has been helpful to argue for the importance of the word “ridiculous” and its powerful valence. As ridiculous as it might sound, the ridiculous means something. It confers standing. It transforms what otherwise would simply be an informing assertion into a tellable assertion. It promises an audience. When what is ridiculous is up for grabs, as it is for those few seconds in the Cookie Exchange, observers can use methodological tools supplied by Labov and his followers to illuminate how interlocutors, as Archer and Duckett are for those 21 seconds at the centre of the Cookie Exchange, use evaluative devices to make their case for what is ridiculous.

If Labov and Pratt give us micro tools to pinpoint the power of the ridiculous in the Cookie Exchange, Billig's reading of Bergson's landmark treatise *Laughter*, provides the macro filter. Bergson, says Billig (2005), taught that laughter was provoked by rigid or mechanical behaviour and argued there was an evolutionary principle at play. "Throughout the book," says Billig, "Bergson discusses different forms of comedy, especially theatrical comedy. Each time he argues that the essence of comedy resides in some form of rigidity. The examples are explained in terms of the general principle that 'the attitudes, gestures and movements of the human body are laughable in exact proportion as that body reminds us of a mere machine.' Thus, the comic is 'something mechanical encrusted on the living' and 'we laugh every time a person gives us the impression of being a thing'" (p. 127). For his part, Gurney (2011, June) also foregrounds this Bergsonian perception of mechanism or inelasticity as Bergson's essence of the comic, quoting the French philosopher from *Laughter:* "What life and society require of each of us is a constantly alert attention that discerns the outlines of the present situation, together with a certain elasticity of mind and body to enable us to adapt ourselves in consequence" (p. 114). Gurney draws Bergson's argument to its next step. Witnessing the failure to adapt, says Gurney, “is construed as a type of shock that we retaliate against with a chorus of laughter” (p. 114).

For Bergson, an evolutionary imperative is present in this function of ridiculing laughter. Again, Billig (2005) is our guide. “Bergson is suggesting that inelastic behaviour is non-adapted. His words echo Spencer, who in *The Principles of Psychology* had distinguished between behaviour that is adapted to the environment and behaviour that is non-adapted. Bergson’s argument proceeded along parallel lines, as he wrote that society needs a way to prevent ‘the easy automatism of acquired habits’ and to avoid ‘inelasticity of character, of mind and even of body’” (p. 127). Far from attributing to laughter and ridicule the easy social virtues, Bergson gives laughter and ridicule important work to do, and necessary work involved, no less, in the very existence, or, perhaps, more accurately, the continued existence of society. “He was proposing,” Billig says, “that all societies need to hold the threat of mockery over their members. Otherwise their members might be tempted into the sort of rigidity that would threaten the continuation of society” (p. 128).

When CBC reporter Archer asks, “Isn’t it rather ridiculous that you’re talking about eating a cookie when the associate minister is talking about a cri-?,” it is, fundamentally, a demonstration of elasticity that is being requested, Bergson/Billig allows us to see. Two days before, the associate minister in question, Dr. Raj Sherman, had released an email in which he claimed to place “into context again for the fourth minister, the fourth CEO, and the third deputy minister, the underlying causes of the health care system woes leading to the emergency crisis that we have on our hands today (and have had for the past 5-6 years)” (quoted in Cournoyer, 2010). This was the issue, in fact, that brought Duckett together with provincial health care colleagues on the day of the Cookie Exchange with Edmonton media. Without taking the side of the reporters, it is evident that they, and, especially the CBC reporter Archer, are seeking to develop the story of emergency room protocols by getting Duckett's reaction to Sherman's assertion. Bergson helps us to see that what Duckett communicates in return is the mechanistic rigidity productive of laughter. The rigidity is on display from the top of the encounter as Duckett ignores the cue to stop and talk that is CTV reporter Tupper's question—"Excuse me, Mr. Duckett, do you mind just taking a few minutes with me to answer some questions?—by not breaking gait, providing both a childhood manners lesson from Duckett himself ("…no, not while I'm eating") and the perfunctory and apologetic dismissal of the public relations handler from Duckett's colleague ("sorry, we've got another meeting to go to"). The first note of the mechanical enters at this point, as Duckett uses his cookie-carrying hand as a lever that operates in the direction of the CTV reporter's face, a movement repeated an instant later at the 0:11-second mark of the video with a more pronounced repetition of the arm motion toward the same reporter's face, actually causing her to recoil slightly in apparent surprise. In those first 11 seconds of Cookie Exchange, viewers have witnessed Duckett exit the realm of social convention suggested by the appeal to manners and take on the aspect of a machine oblivious enough to those same social conventions by twice projecting the cookie he is carrying into the facial area of the inquiring reporter. Recalling Billig's selection from Bergson, the first seconds of the Cookie Exchange give viewers a Stephen Duckett who is both a living entity and a mechanical encrustation on that living thing. And as Duckett approaches the hotel staircase's descent, this incongruity becomes more pronounced and the rigidity repeated, and because repeated, more evident. At the 0:28 mark, Duckett repeats that he is eating his cookie. At 0:37 seconds, Duckett remarks that he is still eating his cookie. At 0:51 seconds, in response to a question asking him to explain why he won't stop to talk, he asserts, with a new note of emotion in his voice, that he is eating a cookie. The rhythm of the mere machine has been established. At the 1:00 mark, the CTV reporter slightly changes tack, suggesting not that she would like Duckett to stop and talk but that "people are interested in hearing from you." This differently angled question draws the mechanistic response: "I'm interested in eating my cookie." What follows is the ridiculous interregnum, which Duckett punctuates, now almost predictably, with the assertion that, "And I'm eating my cookie." Then at 1:31 the question from reporter Tupper, "Is this a problem that can be fixed in four years, sir, do you think?" is returned with a question from Duckett, "Have you heard my answer?" that is little more than a preview of Duckett's answer to the next question from reporter Tupper: "Did you hear what I just said? I said I'm eating my cookie."

As Billig (2005) teaches, Bergson had deep philosophical reasons for equating the comic with rigidity, including Bergson's view that "life is not comprised purely of material elements: the world of the spirit, or the intangible force of life, has equal reality" (quoted in Billig, p. 129). In fact, a Bergsonian would find in this spiritual force of life the *sine qua non* of evolution, through which living matter seeks to overcome the limitations of matter. "At best, there would be a rigid reproduction of what already exists," Billig writes. "Since circumstances change, this rigidity would preclude adaptation and, thus, life itself would be threatened" (p. 130). Humanity, says Billig of Bergson's theory, precludes the possibility of being mere automata. "We cannot just be machines," says Billig in this vein, "for the more machine-like we appear, the more risible we become in the eyes of our fellow human beings" (p. 130).

And risible Duckett was in the eyes of many who left comments on Cookie Exchange's YouTube comment forum page. "lol i love this guy hes hilarious, that sure was one good cookie," wrote YouTube user identified as spritestuff, while productionsgonebad wrote of Duckett's pointing the cookie directly at the face of reporter Tupper that "0:10 is my favourute part! lolz :)." The reporting corps takes its share of criticism in the YouTube comments field, but it is interesting to tentatively suggest a difference in the tenor of the comments aimed at Duckett versus those aimed at the reporters. The reporters are cited for being "annoying and suffocating" (AnA MaRiA MaNtllLa Herrera), "dicks" who "hound" (ramkedoodle) and "impatient" and "pushy" (stillkillzz). But Duckett is laughed at. Along this theme, there is this assessment form elisiabattell: "I don't think he should have gotten fired for this, and his privacy should have been respected and taken into consideration, but i think his attempt to act above the reporters made him look pretty foolish. :]" The Bergsonian portal provided by Billig allows observers to suggest an explanation for this. And that is that while the actions of the reporters drew criticism for contravening manners or mores, they did not draw as much fire for being mechanistic and rigid, even though they, too, repeated and repeated a machine-like question-asking of Duckett. On balance, that verdict was saved for the laughed-at, and the fired (or the rendered politically extinct) Stephen Duckett.

To different extents and for different purposes, theoreticians Bergson and Labov and Pratt and political communicators Archer and Duckett are all agreed on a meaning of laughter beyond the superficial version that would have us believe it's just good to laugh.

Undoubtedly, it is. But laughter also delivers control and control is power and power is of interest whenever communication happens in a political context, as it does in Cookie Exchange. Bergson allows us to see laughable, mechanistic behavior on each side of the Duckett-Archer divide, and invites us to contemplate a deeper meaning of this rigidity. Labov and Pratt foreground the currency carried by a judgment of the ridiculous in our public conversations. And Archer and Duckett put the concepts of all these theorists into action as they spar over the right to confer the word ridiculous on the other, a skill that Jon Stewart has gotten powerful by mastering. It is a skill that the remix artist also participates in, an art that can be fruitfully approached via a short trip back in technological time.

Second Meditation: The Incongruous

In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, John Locke (1975) turned in Book II, chapter XI to speak of discerning, and other operations of the mind. Discerning, said the 17th century English philosopher, is the mental operation of distinguishing between several ideas it has, and upon this ability is built knowledge. “Unless the Mind had a distinct Perception of different Objects, and their Qualities, it would be capable of very little Knowledge,” Locke writes. Arriving at truth, we are told, “*depends upon this clear discerning Faculty* of the Mind, whereby it perceives two Ideas to be the same, or different” (p. 155). In *Laughter and Ridicule: Towards a Social Critique of Humour*, Michael Billig (2005) makes much of this celebrated passage in communications studies as he charts a course to the Lockean headwaters of the incongruity theory of humour. Billig begins with a paraphrase of Locke’s discerning of discerning, adding a time dimension to the work that the faculty undertakes: “The mind,” Billig states, “having received clear and distinct impressions, must be able to compare present impressions with past memories in order to discern whether present perceptions resemble or differ from past ones” (p. 62). Locke distinguishes between two orders of discerning that are separated by the degree of cognitive sway that apparent likeness, or similitude, exerts on the mind of the observer. On one end of the spectrum is judgment, and on the other is wit, the former being heavily favoured by the philosopher. “*Judgment*,” Locke teaches, “lies…in separating carefully, one from another, *Ideas*, wherein can be found the least difference, thereby to avoid being misled by Similitude, and by affinity to take one thing for another” (p. 156). More common is the observation of men with a great deal of wit, says Locke, men whose wit and “prompt Memories” should not be mistaken for those with the clearest judgment or deepest reason. In wit lies the capacity to quickly and creatively assemble ideas and to manufacture resemblance or congruity, “thereby,” Locke states, “to make up pleasant Pictures, and agreeable Visions in the Fancy” (p. 156). It is this ability to bring congruity to incongruous ideas, to bring dissimilarities together, that is the skill of the wit, says Billig in his reading of Locke, to which we provisionally add the skill of the remix artist. The one who uses judgment, says Locke, proceeds “quite contrary to Metaphor and Allusion, wherein, for the most part, lies that entertainment and pleasantry of Wit, which strikes so lively on the Fancy, and therefore so acceptable to all People; because its Beauty appears at first sight, and there is required no labour of thought, to examine what Truth or Reason there is in it. The Mind without looking any farther, rests satisfied with the agreeableness of the Picture” (p. 156-7). Toggle forward four centuries and we can discern in the remix artist the modern media figure who draws on and takes advantage of the audience’s predilection for the quick and creative assembly of ideas.

It can be a helpful counterbalance to allow Locke’s thoughts free passage out of the confines of his own age. If nothing else, doing so can provide a degree of critical distance from those interpretations that today would overwhelm us with the supposed newness of our contemporary mediascape. Consider the case presented by former Stanford University law professor and creative commons apologist Lawrence Lessig, the powerful pull of which may cause us to conclude that our times are more new under the sun than they are. In his book *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy*, Lessig (2008) argues for that newness, and on the level of shape of our communication, he and others who echo his arguments are quite right when they point to the rise of the image, the rise of sound, and the relative decline of the printed word in our time. Lessig recounts that for most of the Middle Ages, the elite spoke and wrote Latin, while the masses spoke the local, vernacular languages we now know as English, French and German. “What was important to the elites was thus inaccessible to the masses,” Lessig writes. “The most ‘important’ texts were understood by only a few” (p. 68). And then the finding of similitude: “Text is today’s Latin,” Lessig says. While those of us who converse in the printed word continue on as if nothing has changed since Locke’s time, the masses gather their information from other forms of media, namely, television, film, music, and music video. “These forms of ‘writing’ are the vernacular of today,” Lessig argues. “They are the kinds of ‘writing’ that matters to most.” Lessig, quoting statistics current at the time of publication of *Remix*, cites the Nielsen Media Research finding that the average TV in the United States is left on for 8.25 hours a day, “more than an hour longer than a decade ago.” Numbers that have since emerged support Lessig’s thesis in telling the story of print’s decline. According to the Pew Research Center’s media consumption study, those who have read a book in print declined from 41 per cent in 2002 to 38 per cent in 2006 to 30 per cent in 2012. Those who read a print newspaper dropped from 34 per cent to 23 per cent over the same period. Those who read a print magazine decreased from 23 per cent to 17 per cent over the same period. And those who wrote or received a personal letter dropped from 20 per cent in 2006 to 12 per cent in 2012.

Lessig (2008) then proceeds to argue that this decline in print’s power in the online age has occurred at the same time as a parallel democratization of participation allowed by the other media. “The Internet and digital technologies opened these media to the masses," Lessig asserts, as he describes what he calls an emerging Read/Write media ecology. "Using the tools of digital technology…anyone can begin to 'write' using images, or music, or video" (p. 69). In *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life and Beyond: From Production to Produsage*, Axel Bruns (2009) identifies this same affordance of new media, from which he builds the concept of produsage the older pattern of passive media viewership. Bruns says that the mediascape that has emerged in our time features, in part, "participants [who] are not simply passive consumers, but active users, with some of them participating more strongly with a focus on their own personal use, some of them participating more strongly in ways which are inherently constructive and productive of social networks and communal content." (p. 23). Shirky (2009), in *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations*, speaks of social tools that "remove older obstacles to public expression, and thus remove the bottlenecks that characterized mass media. The result is the mass amateurization of efforts previously reserved for media professionals" (p. 55). And in *Convergence Culture: Where Old And New Media Collide*, Jenkins (2006) adds his voice to the academic chorus, distilling the essence of participatory culture in this way: "Rather than talking about media producers and consumers as occupying separate roles, we might now see them as participants who interact with each other according to a new set of rules that none of us fully understands" (Introduction).

Lessig (2008) confronts this new mediascape and finds that what he terms its read-write essence (read-write is opposed to read-only, terms from computer or hacker culture denoting permissions that might attach to a computer file that Lessig has borrowed for his argument) has allowed to appear this ostensibly new phenomenon: the remix. Speaking of its practitioners, or artists, Lessig says: “They remix, or quote, a wide range of “texts” to produce something new. These quotes, however, happen at different layers. Unlike text, where the quotes follow in a single line—such as here, where the sentence explains, “and then a quote gets added”—remixed media may quote sounds over images, or video over text, or text over sounds. The quotes thus get mixed together. The mix produces the new creative work—the “remix” (p. 69).

Lessig (2008) then likens what is happening in the activity of remixing by borrowing an observation from filmmaker Johan Söderberg, who goes the similitude route, likening Lessig’s “something new” to something very old, namely, the art of cooking. “To me,” Lessig reports Söderberg as having told him, “it is just like cooking. In your cupboard in your kitchen you have lots of different things and you try to connect different tastes together to create something interesting” (p. 71). Interesting is a key word here. Lessig prefers the word powerful, testifying that “my favorites among the remixers I’ve seen are all cases in which the mix delivers a message more powerfully than any original alone could, and certainly more than words alone could” (p. 71). And then an even more powerful assessment of the power of remixes: “For anyone who has lived in our era, a mix of images and sounds makes its point far more powerfully than any eight-hundred-word essay in the *New York Times* could” (p. 74). Both Söderberg’s cooking analogy and Lessig’s tribute to the power of remixes make clear that we are in the territory of sensation produced by mixture, and that remixers can be seen simply as purveyors of Locke’s witty similitude, adjusted, of course, for our technological times. A brief consideration of Lessig’s favourite of his favourite remixes, a one-minute, 14-second Sӧderberg remix titled “Read My Lips-Eternal Love,” will help make this point.

Read My Lips-Eternal Love, cooked up by Söderberg in 2002, is an exquisite, elaborate and laughter-invoking editing effort aimed at making momentarily congruous the visual contention that United States President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, allies in the propagandic runup to and execution of the war against Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, are romantic lovers. It is one of a series of music-video remixes made by Soderberg between 2001 and 2004 for the Swedish TV show kobra and housed on the film director and editor's audiovisual channel. Viewers of the remixed video are asked or challenged to find a relationship between the two western leaders and singers Lionel Richie and Diana Ross, whose duet 1981 hit "Endless Love" is married in the remix to the lip-synched mouth movements, some treated with a slow-motion editing effect, of each political leader. In a careful series of edits using commandeered Internet video from presidential news conferences and speeches of the time, Söderberg puts Richie's voice in Bush's mouth. The beginning of the remix sets the tone and feel for entire work as viewers are treated to the sight and sound of the 43rd American president "singing" My love/There's only you in my life/The only thing that's bright while images of Blair and of Bush and Blair together move across the screen. Söderberg's Blair, cast in the female role, returns the profession of love, "singing" My first love/You're every breath that I take/You're every step I make before lover and loved join together to "sing" And I/I want to share all my love/With you. The remix continues on in this fashion for another half verse before the spell is broken by a musical collage featuring film of a bomb detonation and a generic suited man whose face is obscured by an animated Devo-style helmet and a bite of sung lyrics from the forgettable Melissa Tkautz 1991 pop video musical plea for sex, "Read My Lips."

Lessig (2008) judges that "the execution is almost perfect" before returning to his adjective of choice. "The message couldn't be more *powerful* [emphasis added]: an emasculated Britain, as captured in the puppy love of its leader for Bush. The obvious point is that a remix like this can't help but make its argument, at least in our culture, far more effectively than could words" (p. 74). Many of those who left comments on the atmomedia YouTube page, where the remix was re-posted in November 2006, agreed with Lessig's assessment, testifying that they found the Bush-Richie-Blair-Ross swirl powerfully funny. Among these typical comedic aesthetic assessments were from YouTube user kmims2006, who said "Ha, This is hilarious," user snowdjagga who opined "This is SO SO old! but still is funny as hell!" and from michel vonk who put it this way: "Two people the are not funny but when you see this for the first time boot are funny. Nice clip and its a good funny joke."

What is happening in Söderberg's remix, like all good remixes, is complex and elusive in (ways) that escape full grasp on first viewings. Jonathan McIntosh (2012) includes Read My Lips in his "A history of subversive remix video before YouTube: Thirty political video mashups made between World War II and 2005," but the checklist he provides helps with the unpacking of meaning. McIntosh says a remix happens when observed works:

a. appropriate mass media audiovisual source material without permission,
b. comment on or challenge media narratives and traditional power structures, being either sympathetic or antagonistic to their pop culture sources,
c. transform the original messages embedded in the source material,

d. deal in mass media formats, including news segments and music videos, underlining their author's intention to aim the work at non-elite audiences, and
e. rely on grassroots distribution methods.

These characteristics are apparent in Read My Lips. The remix images of Bush and Blair, and sound of the soul singers are apparently taken without the sanction of the copyright owners, given the lack of any written or visual credit, conventional media sources that originally recorded and broadcast them. Söderberg's technique inherently challenges the traditional media narratives. His decision to place words other than those spoken by the political actors into their mouths is as if to say that what they are shown to be saying in the original broadcasts, however dealing in technical fidelity, is the real lie. This transforms the status of the message in that original source material. Söderberg's decision to use the audio-visual remix format, and not, say, an op-ed essay in *The Washington Post* or the *Times of London*, signals the non-elite viewers he is aiming at, a decision underlined by the use of his own online TV channel and the YouTube channels of others to disseminate the work. But the McIntosh checklist, however helpful, is written from sociology's critical tradition, in which the ubiquitous concept of power along with related ones of subversion, government, cultural terrorism, and politics are among the typical terms given explicit analysis. This may leave the mistaken (because it is incomplete) impression that the political remix is coterminous with the advent of the postmodern school of thought.

Reading John Locke helps us to see that isn't the whole picture. Or, perhaps, that the pictures in the Söderberg remix and others in its vein aren't the whole story. And that is simply because a sympathetic reading of the Locke passages above, and an openness to their being able to meaningfully move through time to inform us, suggests that what is happening in the modern political remix is also the old story of wit's employ of similitude. In Read My Lips–Eternal Love, Bush and Blair are likened to infatuated lovers. This is not to argue that George W. Bush and Tony Blair did not engage in a kind of blind-to-the-facts, infatuated pursuit of an alliance between each other's nations in the period preceding the invasion (and subsequent failure to find the so-called weapons of mass destruction allegedly in the possession of the Iraqi regime), nor that the Richie-Ross syrupy love ballad somehow does not fit the atmosphere of the political courtship. It is just to say that in the viewing of the remix in question, and political remixes in general, we are in the arena of power produced by likeness, and not necessarily in Locke's precisely-arrived-at equation of judgment. The shape of the presentation may, indeed, be as different as printed text is to streamed video and audio, but the rhetorical method of giving shape to a communicated argument remains the same now as it was in Locke's time as it was in ages before him.

A quick survey of some of the historic remixes on McIntosh's (2012) list helps to confirm the fundamental insight that, as we consider the big picture of the remix, we are in the powerful appearances game.

1. Lambeth Walk—According to McIntosh's YouTube channel, this 1941 Charles A. Ridley re-edit "was distributed uncredited to newsreel companies in the US and UK. Made 60+ years before YouTube, it is regarded as one of the first political remix videos." As McIntosh himself points out, Ridley "re-edited existing footage of Hitler and Nazi Soldiers (taken from Leni Riefenstahl's propaganda film *Triumph of the*

Will) to make it *appear* [emphasis added] they were marching and dancing to 'The Lambeth Walk'" (2012, n.p.).

2. Apocalypse Pooh—At just under eight minutes in length, this remix of Disney's Winnie The Pooh animated characters and scenes and voice over from Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* from the mind and editing suite of Todd Graham approaches the status of allegory. And it trades in supposed likeness of character all along the way, including Rabbit as the breakdown-prone, homesick, pot-smoking Chef; Christopher Robin as the Sam Bottoms-played California surfer character, Lance; Roo as South Bronx's teenaged warrior Clean; Owl as the commanding officer Chief; and Pooh as Army Captain Benjamin Willard, portrayed by Martin Sheen.
3. The Street Muppets N.W.A—The differences between Sesame Street character Kermit The Frog and gangsta rapper Ice Cube of N.W.A. are edited away during the length of this political remix made in 1994 by an unnamed student at Florida State University in which the Muppet is pictured lip-synching (if frogs have lips) to the protest song Fuck The Police.
4. The Fellowship of the Ring of Free Trade—The St01en Collective's 2002 political remix, using images and sound from Peter Jackson's epic big screen saga *Lord of the Rings*, likens various characters in the real-world fight against global free trade agreements to characters from J.R.R. Tolkien's saga of those from Middle Earth who fight to destroy the ring of power.
5. John Ashcroft vs The Aliens—In 2001 remix artist Davy Force wittily likens the video image of U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft to that of a space alien during a

news conference outlining American plans to deal with illegal immigration here on their patch of Earth.

To this partial list of internationally shared and acclaimed political remixes that deal cleverly, powerfully and humorously in the manufacture of resemblance, we add an equally brief summary of the remix that has sparked this collection of meditations, “Goodbye Goodbye Dr. Duckett—The cookie has crumbled!”, the work of Edmonton remix artist, rmthespian, known offline as Edmonton videographer and editor Robert McKoen. Posted to YouTube in November 2010, the work serves as a sort of remix epitaph on the curiously ended career of Stephen Duckett as president and chief executive officer of Alberta Health Services, that province’s government-funded health authority. In the remix, Duckett’s moving image is appropriated from a television news interview—in which he infamously and colourfully declined to answer news reporters’ questions, orally and visually punctuating those refusals by saying he was eating a cookie, which he was—and combined with images from *Sesame Street* and *The Apprentice*. At the heart of the remix’s re-reading of the original television interview is an adept likening of Duckett to that Muppet who is without equal in his chaotic and single-minded devotion to cookies, the Cookie Monster. Henry Jenkins called it “a remarkable story about the *power* [emphasis added] of grassroots media and participatory culture” (private correspondence). David Gurney said “it really is one of those cases where a kernel of the incongruity in that initial clip…gets plucked out and recombined *marvelously* by some astute viewers” (private correspondence). (Locke might say entertainingly and pleasantly and wittily, striking so lively on the Fancy.) As McIntosh makes clear, there is a lot going on in a political remix. There is appropriation of images, there is transformation of meaning of Duckett's cookie actions (from a visual punctuation mark on his no comment stance to an exclamation mark on his perceived aloofness and flippancy), there is the social network that transmits the remix, and all of these factors bear the scrutiny of serious reflection. But it also bears repeating that there is a prior point to be made and that is that in political remixes, whether Lambeth Walk from 1941 or Goodbye, Goodbye from almost 70 years later, we are in a force field of image and sensation. This is a needful reminder for the critical thinker in our time, a too-bright era that allows ever quicker means of accessing visual memories and ever more creative and artful means of sewing them together to produce agreeable reactions, including laughter, that, however pleasant, might only keep us from considering that there is another category of discerning—Locke's judgment—that may stay dark and hidden from view.

Recorded and played-back film video, and the seemingly magical affordances of analog and now modern digital editing tools that bring moving pictures to life, themselves aid in boosting this agreeable experience of making the incongruous congruous. In his idea-rich and compelling June 2011 doctoral dissertation titled "Infectious Culture: Virality, Comedy, and Transmediality in the Digital Age," David Michael Gurney helps make this point as he looks back to the emotional experience of the early days of cinema, using Gunning as his own guide. Gurney characterizes Gunning's argument this way: "Conceiving of early cinema in this mode, he asserts that the magic or trick films of George Méliès do not aspire to narrative coherence, but instead, 'The story simply provides a frame upon which to string a demonstration of the magical possibilities of the cinema'" (p. 121). Gurney also uses Gunning to cite the concept of "attraction" from the theoretical writing of Soviet Russian film director and film theorist Sergei Eisenstein, considered to be the Father of Montage, who underlined the force directed at the viewer of moving pictures in saying “an attraction aggressively subjected the spectator to ‘sensual or psychological impact.’” The early cinema, says Gurney, “reveled in the medium’s very ability to display and to play visual tricks” (p. 121). Indeed, what is old is new again, and clear to see in the remix examples listed above. In Lambeth Walk, Nazi soldiers come out of Ridley’s editing suite interrupting their march with the Cockney-style dance step reminiscent of the dance of the same name. This is done with a simple edit to effect the look of a backward step from the jackboot marchers. In Apocalypse Pooh, a wide shot of the Vietnamese jungle from *Apocalypse Now* is edited to signature overture music from Winnie The Pooh, all of which transforms, after the trees are consumed in a sudden napalm attack through a clever edit, into the animated video of Pooh’s residence in the Hundred Acre Wood. Related visual, entertaining trickery occurs in The Street Muppets N.W.A and The Fellowship of the Ring of Free Trade and, notably, in John Ashcroft vs. The Aliens where the image of the head of Ashcroft repeatedly pulses into the shape of a Martian while he speaks, voice unaltered in the remix editing process, from behind a U.S. government podium to an audience of news reporters and television cameras.

The virtuoso editing on display in McIntosh’s pantheon of remixes is also evident in rmthespian’s presentation of Duckett in the Goodbye, Goodbye remix. In what follows I am indebted to the analytical framework supplied by Berger in *An Anatomy of Humor*. Berger, of course, is laying out a typology of humour, but his concepts are pertinent to the argument at hand, which aims not at why Goodbye, Goodbye is funny as much as at making clear the art of likeness at the heart of the political remix. (Arguably, this is not an unnatural importation, as one of the intentions of the remix artist in Goodbye, Goodbye was to produce laughter in viewers.) Among Berger's techniques that are germane to that task of making unlike into like are analogy, caricature, eccentricity, impersonation, and mimicry.

Analogy—When humour is produced by analogy, "it is based on some kind of invidious comparison" (p. 22) and in its more sophisticated manifestation in involves "an elaborate metaphor in which seemingly incongruous elements are united" (p. 22). In Goodbye, Goodbye, rmthespian participates in the production of analogy, comparing the cookie-carrying, the cookie-chewing, and the cookie-citing Duckett to the Cookie Monster, uniting the human and Muppet by various editing contrivances, including the decision to lay down a bed of sound from a *Sesame Street* sketch over moving images of Duckett.

Caricature—When humor deals in caricature, Berger says, there is a "ludicrous and grotesque representation of people by exaggeration of their characteristic features and, at the same time, retention of likeness" (p.26). Remixer rmthespian deals in caricature, using slow-motion effects to exaggerate Duckett's movements and facial expressions.

Eccentricity—Berger says this technique is in play when humour "is based on the difference between what is customary, 'normal,' or what we are used to and what we find when we experience the abnormal or the deviant" (p. 32). The use at the 1:05 mark in the remix of spliced clips from a *Calgary Herald* interview of Duckett to make him appear to say, "That's what our job is. Just making it up" helps reveal the gap between the model of the knowledgeable, professional bureaucrat and his behaviour as an obfuscating member of the elite revealed to be childish.

Impersonation—Berger allows for laughter to result involuntarily; that is, “when a person makes a mistake, does not realize that he is impersonating someone…and rather fantastic consequences result” (p. 38). As will be seen clearly in the substantive, recipe-card analysis in segment 2 below, 17 of the first 18 scenes of the Goodbye, Goodbye remix involve rmthespian in choosing to align the scenes so that they move back and forth from Duckett holding a cookie to the Cookie Monster holding a cookie, aggressively subjecting the spectator to draw the conclusion that Duckett is impersonating the Cookie Monster. The dramatic irony of the audience knowing this and Duckett seemingly not being aware of the impersonation he is author of only heightens the pleasure of some of those viewing it.

Mimicry—Berger states this occurs with “a person maintaining his own identity while, at the same time, ‘stealing’ or ‘borrowing’ the identity of others” (p. 42). Unlike the decision made by the remixer who produced John Ashcroft vs. The Aliens, rmthespian does not graft a Cookie Monster head onto the image of Duckett, instead preserving Duckett’s bodily integrity while melding his personality with that of the Muppet.

Analogy, caricature, eccentricity, impersonation and mimicry are all powerful techniques in the tradition of metaphor and allusion to attract an audience and, as Locke (1975) might say, strike lively on its fancy, making beauty appear at first sight, requiring no labour of thought “to examine what Truth or Reason there is in it. The Mind without looking in farther, rests satisfied with the agreeableness of the Picture” (pp. 156-7). Anecdotally, the comments left by YouTube users on the Goodbye, Goodbye page seem to confirm the prescience of Locke. Yes, user HJBookman provided this thoughtful response: “And the terrible thing about this is the government will make him a scapegoat for the disaster that our health care is in.” But can the same be said about the comments from pentica (“it was nuts and raisins lol”), jayzee2 (“looked like a choc chip”), ronald teske (“It must have been a dam good cookie….I need to know where to get me one of them.”) or spenore, whose racialist comment is confused culturally and orthographically (“go back to cockie land”)?

Our online, audiovisual mediascape, where remixes live and breed and spread, is a space of manufactured verisimilitude. Our shared spaces have likely always been marked by the beauty of wittily likening one thing to another. With some subtlety, Locke himself, in the Epistle Dedicatory to his essay on human understanding, testifies to this entrenched tendency, saying “Things in print must stand and fall by their own Worth, or the Reader’s Fancy” (p. 3), using all the might of the tiny conjunction “or” to foreshadow his lesson. The goal of this meditation has simply been to test Lessig’s brand of supposed newness as captured in the remix, and suggest a line of sight, albeit somewhat ancient, from which it is not all new, after all. And there are no signs that this not-so-new newness is doing anything but becoming more entrenched in our imaginations, and we, perhaps, in it.

Mark Poster also helps us to see this more clearly. Poster, the late professor emeritus of history and film and media studies at University of California Irvine, certainly differs from Locke on some of the big questions, including the status of the human being. In “Words without Things: The Mode of Information” (1990), Poster contends that Marshall McLuhan did not go far enough with his famous probe that “the medium is the message.” McLuhan, Poster contends, missteps by focusing on the "sensorium" of the receiving subject, preserving, in the tradition of Lockean epistemology, the subject as a perceiving being and not as an interpreting being. "What the mode of information puts into question, however, is not simply the sensory apparatus but the very shape of subjectivity: its relation to the world of objects, its perspective on that world, its location in that world" (p. 73). Poster continues: "We are confronted not so much by a change from a 'hot' to 'cool' communications medium, or by a reshuffling of the sensoria, as McLuhan thought, but by a general destabilization of the subject" (p. 73). But Poster does align with Lockean tradition when it comes, and here we recall Billig, to the degree of cognitive sway that apparent likeness, or similitude, exerts on the mind of the observer-subject. Poster picks up this theme in "The Mode of Information and Postmodernity" (in Craig & Muller, 2007), not, admittedly, in the context of the digital video political remix but, rather, in that of its predecessor, the television commercial. But the analysis travels intact.

The power of the television ad, says Poster (2007), has its source in a totality of experience not available to communication via monologue, print and radio. "The TV ad, unlike the other examples, easily combines images, sounds and writing" (p. 380), says Poster. "It displays moving, aural narratives of everyday reality, at times with great verisimilitude. Because they control the context, the background, as well as the text of the narrative, TV ads contain special powers. The 'reality' they represent can be 'hyperreal', editing in contents not normally found together in 'reality'" (p. 380). All of this—the foregrounding of verisimilitude, the naming of the control of context, background and text, the sensing of resultant special powers that depict, leaving aside for now the question of whether reality needs quotation marks around it, a reality that is not reality—

applies also to the descendant of the television commercial, the political remix. For, hyperreal accurately describes what the viewer experiences when Winnie the Pooh is transported via clever image and audio editing to Vietnam; when Sesame Street muppets Big Bird and Oscar The Grouch are transported via amusing editing to the racially charged neighbourhoods of millennial New York City; or, when the characters from The Lord of the Rings movie trilogy are transported via skilfull writing to the big city streets that are the modern-day battlefields of globalism? And it is in that same key of hyperreality that Goodbye, Goodbye, in which Duckett is likened to the Cookie Monster and then a character in a primetime TV reality show, is composed. As Poster says of the television ad, we say of the political remix and the remix in general: “With great flexibility the ad constructs a mini-reality in which things are set in juxtapositions that violate the rules of the everyday” (2007, p. 380). Poster says: “In particular, TV ads associate meanings, connotations and moods that are inappropriate in reality, subject to objections in dialogic communications, but effective at the level of desire, the unconscious, the imaginary” (p. 380).

Duncombe (2007) briefly surveys the work of cognitive linguist George Lakoff, who found in the mysterious human capacity for metaphor a radical admission that hard information, rationality, reasonableness are not enough. These categories and metaphors, he argues, allow us to “translate hard information and direct experience into a conceptual form familiar and comfortable for us” (p. 10). Duncombe, writing in the critical tradition and its preoccupation with questions of power, writes of the activist communication lesson Lakoff drew from his research: “Progressives need to think less about presenting facts and more about how to frame these facts in such a way that they make sense and hold meaning for everyday people" (p. 10).

The American public intellectual and communications theorist Walter Lippmann (2010) marshalled his prodigious analytical skills to bring to light this human openness to the imaginary. Writing almost a century ago at a time where the written word still ruled the field, Lippmann, the author of the landmark *Public Opinion*, displayed a prescient understanding of the power of the visual image. Here, he uses that understanding, based on his reading of the ancient thinkers, to provide a rough definition of public opinions. "The pictures inside the heads of these human beings, the pictures of themselves, of others, of their needs, purposes, and relationship, are their public opinions" (p. 27). Lippmann is not sanguine when it comes to the human capacity to disentangle from the pictures. "We must note now that with this initial taint," says Lippmann, "public opinions are still further beset because in a series of events seen mostly through stereotypes, we readily accept sequence or parallelism as equivalent to cause and effect" (p. 111). Again, writing as if he was writing in our age of information overload, Lippmann bemoans the mind's inability to sift out from the superfluity and isolate from the clamour of ordinary urban life a reliable sense of things. Of the moments when this inadequacy makes itself most keenly felt, Lippmann says "we learn to understand why our saddled minds seize so little with precision, why they are caught up and tossed about in a kind of tarantella by headlines and catch-words, why so often," and here we ready for a historic Lockean echo, "they cannot tell things apart or discern identity in apparent differences" (p. 59). And then there is this Lockean punctuation mark on his assessment of the environment we fabricate out of preconceptions. "They mark out certain objects as familiar or strange, emphasizing the difference so that the slightly familiar is seen as very familiar, and the somewhat strange as sharply alien. They are aroused by small signs, which may vary from a true index to a vague analogy. Aroused, they flood fresh vision with older images, and project into the world what has been resurrected in memory" (p. 70).

The matter of memory has been hovering around this argument, just out of the line of sight, from the beginning. Recall that Billig (2005), characterizing Locke's argument, said the work of the mind, having received clear and distinct impressions from the external world, was to compare "present impressions with past *memories* [emphasis added] in order to discern whether present perceptions resemble or differ from past ones" (p. 62). Locke (1975) himself mentions "prompt Memories" (p. 156), as, along with wit, a defining characteristic of those men with a great deal of wit whose level of discerning, however favourably and pleasantly valenced, should not be conflated with that at which those with clear judgment and deepest reason operate. Poster (1990) doesn't use the word memory or a variant, but, when he observes that electronic communication has meant that "the exchange of symbols between human beings is now far less subject to constraints of space and time" and that "in principle, information is now instantly available all over the globe and may be stored and retrieved as long as electricity is available," (p. 64), he, too, is foregrounding the importance of memory. Of course, from Locke's time to Poster's, the meaning of memory has added a dimension. Memory still retains its overarching definition of some version of "the faculty by which things are recalled or kept in the mind" (*Oxford Canadian Dictionary*), but that recall, once a function of an individual's capacity to remember things, or an individual's access to books and manuscripts in which information was stored, now admits of search engine midwifery. For instance, and drawing from a real-life example, when I tried to remember Walter Ong's famous aphorism on memory, and couldn't, and couldn't find my copy of *Orality and Literacy*, I entered three words—Walter, Ong, recall—into a Google search field and received, in less than a half-second, about 21,900,000 results, the second of which filled in the gaps in my own memory. "You know," says Ong, "what you can recall" (p. 33). And what can be recalled in our time is the very content of the Internet that deceptively easy search engines such as Google serve as portals to. The Internet, says Gurney (2011, June), has become "the transcoded media archive that allows users to express themselves to one another with small (or occasionally large) audiovisual texts" (p. 232). When everything that has been digitized can be recalled, and when everything that can be recalled can be recombined, and when all of this occurs in time when the image rivals the word as the fundamental grammar of communication, it is little wonder that those driven by wit take advantage of the prompt memory at their fingertips and insert actual material images in their creative video productions. This is the landscape where remix artists find themselves, and we them as, for instance, a present impression of Stephen Duckett captured in his encounter with Edmonton media and shared on YouTube as Cookie Exchange is combined with a past memory, digitally stored, of Cookie Monster.

A discussion of the shape of the political remix takes place as one theme in the greater literature of participatory media. And it is typical in that literature to come across statements of the great hope for the salutary good that participatory media is said to deliver to public, democratic discourse. Characteristic of this point of view is Jenkins: "The power of participation comes not from destroying commercial culture but from writing over it, modding it, amending it, expanding it, adding greater diversity of perspective, and then recirculating it, feeding it back into the mainstream media" (cited in Bruns, 2009, p. 93). And Gans, who, here, is speaking of technology-enabled participatory media's purported ability to undo current power structures: "In the process, the symbolic arena would become more democratic, for the symbolic power of now dominant sources and perspectives would be reduced" (cited in Bruns, p. 95). And there is Lévy, who, while, admittedly, is speaking not about political remix but of a critical, participatory movement of which it is a part, paints a glowing metaphorical picture of what is possible in our time: "We can't reinvent the instruments of communication and collective thought without reinventing democracy…Faced with the choice of turning back or moving forward…humanity has a chance to reclaim its future…by systematically producing the tools that will enable it to shape itself into intelligent communities, capable of negotiating the stormy seas of change (cited in Bruns, p. 366).

One observer who does have political remix foremost in mind is McIntosh, who invests this tool of our time with the ability to challenge social norms, to challenge power and powerful institutions and myths about our society and ourselves. Political remix, says McIntosh, has the power to do nothing less than "create a critical culture" (2012, n.p.). All of this is heady, hopeful stuff. And the critical perspective taken in the pages above on the critical perspective it issues from should not be taken as providing fuel for those who would have a return to the days of the cultural gatekeepers whose power, arguably, had less to do with what they said than the fact they had a market on the means to say it. It is only a reminder, albeit a reminder that took a detour through John Locke's 17th century, that claims of what is new, and claims of how this newness affords a critical distance, should themselves be approached critically. And that the possibility should be kept in view that what we are seeing with a phenomenon like the political remix is more of the same, more of the trading in memory and verisimilitude, albeit, and this will be seen to be pivotal, more of the same from those who, written off like graffiti artists of an earlier time, might not have had the chance to participate as widely in the wares of wit as they can now.

John Locke was writing in a tradition of approaching fundamental questions of human and political communication that traces back to Athens. Whatever else it is, *Gorgias* is an inquiry into the status and power of rhetoric. At the beginning of the dialogue, Plato's Socrates smuggles in almost imperceptibly a duality inherent in the power of those with the power to persuade. The young politician Callicles has offered the philosopher the opportunity to come to his place to listen in person to the celebrated rhetorician, Gorgias. To which Socrates responds: "What you say is good, Callicles. But then, would he be willing to talk with us? For I wish to learn from him what the power of the man's *technē* is, and what it is that he professes and teaches (p. 26). With this, Socrates gently makes a distinction for his interlocutors between what it is the rhetorician says and the power with which he says it, suggesting, perhaps, that the latter category has primary importance. That conjunction *and* is our lesson. This doubleness is reflected in the ancient world's understanding of rhetoric. Nichols (1998) said Aristotle called it "the power [or capacity or ability] in each [case whatsoever] of *discerning* [emphasis added] the available means of persuasion" (p. 4). In other words, the discerning is not just in the service of what people should be persuaded of, but in the service of the manner in which they could be persuaded. And it is rhetoric's role as value-free handmaiden to the powerful that Locke (1975) warned about in a decisive, Enlightenment-inspired attack on rhetoric, the effects of which continue be felt in our time, even though rhetoric itself is little taught. “If we would speak of Things as they are,” said Locke, “we must allow, that all the Art of Rhetorick, besides Order and Clearness, all the artificial and figurative application of Words Eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong *Ideas*, move the Passions, and thereby misled the Judgment; and so indeed are perfect cheat” (p. 508). But, as we will see as we push ahead in this consideration of political remixes, and, in particular, Robert McKoen/rmthespian’s Goodbye, Goodbye, there is much also to be learned about the powerful, cheating perfectness of the art of remixing, a story that is as old as the literature itself.

Exhibit 3

Goodbye, Goodbye Unpacked

Through the art, afforded by digital technology, of McKoen/rmthespian, the Cookie Exchange video was mined for incongruities and transformed into Goodbye, Goodbye. Streamed and experienced in one minute and twenty seconds of running time at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akQ596l-oGQ, the remix is made to stand still below for analytical purposes to set the stage for a more comprehensive review of the literature on incongruity and a discussion of how Goodbye, Goodbye participates in that tradition. This stop-and-review examination sets out the basic ingredients that compose the scenes, which are separated by an editing cut. Presented in the form of a recipe card, this preliminary examination captures the viewer's experience in up to nine categories: elapsed time, objects seen, characters seen, voices/text heard (whether human or not, spoken or sung), soundtrack, appropriated video source, and the nature of the scene, the kind of edit used to move from one scene to the next, as well as any particular editing techniques used to highlight a section of video. VO means voice over, and SOT means sound on tape. These recipe cards serve to set this study from beginning in the realm of scientific knowledge and its requirement of replicability. As Singleton and Straits (2010) make clear, "whether a question can be approached scientifically depends on whether it can be subjected to verifiable observations. That is, it must be possible for the scientist to make observations—which others also are capable of making—that can answer the question" (p. 21).

Scene: 1 Time: 0:00–0:04 Length: 4 seconds

visual content: cityscape (sidewalk, snow, trees, hotel awning, office tower), CTV mic flash, mic, audio recorder, exhaled breath, overcast sky, documents, cookie

characters seen: d’Aliesio, Duckett, assistant, Tupper

voices heard: Cookie Monster

script (sung to accompanying country music): “Goodbye, goodbye, little cookie…”

VO

source: CTV Edmonton, “Cookie Exchange”

editing note: slow-motion has been applied to source video of Duckett

transition: dissolve in from black; straight cut to scene 2

Scene: 2 Time: 0:04–0:08 Length: 3 seconds

visual content: barnyardscape (fence, barn, hay bales, horseshoes, blue sky, cloud, tree), cookie

characters seen: Cookie Monster, Muppet Players (guitar, bass, fiddle), Muppet pig, cow

voices heard: Cookie Monster, players

script (sung to accompanying country music): players: “…cookie…” Cookie Monster: “…Me always remember just you…

SOT

source: Sesame Street “Goodbye Little Cookie”

shot held

transition: straight cut to scene 3

Scene: 3 Time: 0:09–0:10 Length: 1 second

visual content: office wall

characters seen: Duckett (tight shot)

voices heard: Muppet Players

script (sung to accompanying country music): “…just you..

VO

editing note: slow-motion is added to original video of Duckett

transition: straight cut to scene 4

Scene: 4 Time: 0:10–0:12 Length: 2 seconds

visual content: barnyardscape (fence, barn, hay bales, horseshoes, blue sky, cloud, tree), cookie

characters seen: Cookie Monster, Muppet Players (guitar, bass, fiddle), Muppet pig, cow

voices heard: Cookie Monster, players

script (sung to accompanying country music): "…Goodbye, goodbye little…"

SOT

source: Sesame Street "Goodbye Little Cookie"

slow push

transition: straight cut to scene 5

Scene: 5 Time: 0:12–0:14 Length: 2 seconds

visual content: cityscape (sidewalk, snow, trees, hotel awning, office tower), CTV mic flash, mic, audio recorder, exhaled breath, overcast sky, documents, parked car, cookie

characters seen: d'Aliesio, Duckett, assistant, Tupper

voices heard: Cookie Monster

script (sung to accompanying country music): "…cookie…"

VO

source: Cookie Exchange

editing note: slow-motion is applied to original video of Duckett; timing effects Duckett's mouthing "cookie."

transition: straight cut to scene 6

Scene: 6 Time: 0:14–0:17 Length: 3 seconds

visual content: barnyardscape (fence, barn, hay bales, horseshoes, blue sky, cloud, tree), cookie

characters seen: Cookie Monster, Muppet Players (guitar, bass, fiddle), Muppet pig, cow

voices heard: Cookie Monster, players

script (sung to accompanying country music): players: "…cookie…" players and Cookie Monster: "…It's now time to bid you…"

SOT

source: Sesame Street, "Goodbye Little Cookie"

slow push

transition: straight cut to scene 7

Scene: 7 **Time: 0:17–0:18** **Length: 1 second**

visual content: hotel interior 1 (windows, stairwell, pillar), CTV mic flash, purse, cookie

characters seen: Duckett, assistant, Tupper, d'Aliesio

voices heard: Cookie Monster, players

script (sung to accompanying country music): players and Cookie Monster: "…adieu…"

VO

source: Cookie Exchange

editing note: slow-motion applied to original video of Duckett; timing effects congruence of "adieu" and Duckett's motioning with cookie, as if saying goodbye.

transition: straight cut to scene 8

Scene: 8 **Time: 0:19–0:21** **Length: 2 seconds**

visual content: barnyardscape (fence, barn, hay bale)

characters seen: Cookie Monster, Muppet Players (bass, fiddle), Muppet pig

voices heard: Cookie Monster

script (spoken word to accompanying country music): "…Oh, cookie…"

SOT

source: Sesame Street, "Goodbye Little Cookie"

slow push

transition: straight cut to scene 9

Scene: 9 **Time: 0:22–0:25** **Length: 3 seconds**

visual content: hotel interior (carpet, fire extinguisher, panelling) CTV mic flash, ceiling, lights, cookie

characters seen: Duckett, assistant, Tupper, witness

voices heard: Cookie Monster

script (spoken to accompanying country music): "…Me love your nuts and your raisins…"

VO

source: Cookie Exchange

editing note: slow-motion added to original video of Duckett to produce rhythmic effect as movement of cookie matches sung "rai-sins."

transition: straight cut to scene 10

Scene: 10 **Time: 0:25–0:29** **Length: 4 seconds**

visual content: barnyardscape (fence, barn, hay bales, horseshoes), cookie

characters seen: Cookie Monster, Muppet Players (bass, fiddle), Muppet pig

voices heard: Cookie Monster, players

script (sung to accompanying country music): players: "…raisins…" Cookie Monster: "Me love your colour and…"

SOT

slow push

transition: straight cut to scene 11

Scene: 11 **Time: 0:29–0:31** **Length: 2 seconds**

visual content: hotel interior (pillar, panelling, elevator door) CTV mic flash, purse, lights, cookie

characters seen: Duckett, assistant, Tupper, d'Aliesio

voices heard: Cookie Monster, players

script (sung to accompanying country music): Cookie Monster: "…smell…" players: "…smell…"

VO

editing note: slow-motion added to original video of Duckett; timing effects congruence between sung lyric "smell" and Duckett's motioning of cookie toward reporter's face/nose area

transition: straight cut to scene 12

Scene: 12 **Time: 0:31–0:34** **Length: 3 seconds**

visual content: barnyardscape (fence, barn, hay bales), cookie

characters seen: Cookie Monster, Muppet Players (bass, fiddle), Muppet pig

voices heard: Cookie Monster

script (sung to accompanying country music): Cookie Monster: "Me like to hold you forever…"

SOT

slow push

transition: straight cut to scene 13

Scene: 13 Time: 0:35–0:36 Length: 1 second

visual content: cityscape (sidewalk, snow, trees, hotel awning, office tower), CTV mic flash, exhaled breath, overcast sky, parked car, cookie

characters seen: d'Aliesio, Duckett, assistant, Tupper

voices heard: players, Cookie Monster

script (sung to accompanying country music): players: "…ever…" Cookie Monster: "But…"

VO

source: Cookie Exchange

editing note: slow-motion added to original video of Duckett; timing effects congruence between "eh" motion of Duckett's mouth and beginning of sung "ever"

transition: straight cut to scene 14

Scene: 14 Time: 0:36–0:37 Length: 1 second

visual content: barnyardscape (fence, barn, hay bales), cookie

characters seen: Cookie Monster, Muppet Players (bass, fiddle), Muppet pig

voices heard: Cookie Monster

script (sung to accompanying country music): Cookie Monster: "Now it is…"

SOT

source: Sesame Street, "Goodbye Little Cookie"

slow push to tight

transition: straight cut to scene 15

Scene: 15 Time: 0:37–0:40 Length: 3 seconds

visual content: cityscape (sidewalk, snow, trees, hotel awning, window blinds), CTV mic flash, exhaled breath, overcast sky, parked vehicle, cookie

characters seen: d'Aliesio, Duckett, assistant, Tupper, Archer, Briar Stewart

voices heard: Cookie Monster, players

script (sung to accompanying country music): Cookie Monster: "…time for farewell…" Players: "for farewell…"

VO

source: Cookie Exchange

editing note: slow-motion added to original video of Duckett; timing effects congruence between Duckett's looking to his watch and sung "sung"

transition: straight cut to scene 16

Scene: 16 Time: 0:40–0:43 Length: 3 seconds
visual content: barnyardscape (fence, barn, hay bales, horseshoes, blue sky, cloud, tree), cookie
characters seen: Cookie Monster, Muppet Players (guitar, bass, fiddle), Muppet pig, cow, chicken
voices heard: Cookie Monster, players
script (sung to accompanying country music): Cookie Monster: "…So…" Cookie Monster and players: "…goodbye, goodbye little…"
SOT
source: Sesame Street "Goodbye Little Cookie"
shot held
transition: straight cut to scene 17

Scene: 17 Time: 0:43–0:44 Length: 1 second
visual content: cityscape (sidewalk, snow, trees, hotel awning, office tower, parked cars), CTV mic flash, mic, audio recorder, exhaled breath, overcast sky, documents, cookie
characters seen: d'Aliesio, Duckett, assistant, Tupper
voices heard: Cookie Monster, players
script (sung to accompanying country music): Cookie Monster and players: "…cookie…"
VO
source: Cookie Exchange
editing note: slow-motion applied to original video of Duckett; timing effects congruence between Duckett's mouthing and sung "cookie"
transition: straight cut to scene 18

Scene: 18 Time: 0:45–0:48 Length: 3 seconds
visual content: barnyardscape (fence, barn, hay bales, horseshoes, blue sky, cloud, tree), cookie
characters seen: Cookie Monster, Muppet Players (guitar, bass, fiddle), Muppet pig, cow, chicken, cookie
voices heard: Cookie Monster, players

script (sung to accompanying country music): Cookie Monster and players: "…It's now time to bid you…"

SOT

source: Sesame Street "Goodbye Little Cookie"

shot held

transition: straight cut to scene 19

Scene: 19 Time: 0:49–0:52 Length: 3 seconds

visual content: boardroom, desk, phone, water, glass, wall

characters seen: Duckett

voices heard: Cookie Monster, players

script (sung to accompanying country music): Cookie Monster and players: "...adieu. Adoo. Goodbye, cookie…"

VO

source: "Health Czar Stephen Duckett on Health care mistrust in Alberta," by CalgaryHeralddotcom at 0:35-0:36

shot held

editing note: Slow motion effect added, and cuts to simulate stop motion rewind added.

transition: straight cut to scene 20

Scene: 20 Time: 0:53–1:03 Length: 10 seconds

visual content: barnyardscape tight (fence, barn, hay bales, horseshoes), handkerchief, cookie

characters seen: Cookie Monster, Muppet fiddle player, pig, chicken

voices heard: Cookie Monster

script (spoken to accompanying country music): Cookie Monster: "…um um um um um um um um um um um um um um. You always hurt the one you love. Sniff sniff sniff sniff [nose blow].

SOT

source: Sesame Street, "Goodbye Little Cookie"

slow push

transition: dissolve to scene 21

Scene: 21 Time: 1:04–1:04 Length: <1 second

visual content: black

transition: straight cut to scene 22

Scene: 22 Time: 1:05–1:06 Length: 1 second

visual content: boardroom, phone, water, glass, wall

characters seen: Duckett

voices heard: Duckett, Trace Adkins

script: (spoken by Duckett, sung by Adkins): Duckett: "…That's what our job is…" Adkins: "You may not…"

SOT

source: "Health Czar Stephen Duckett on Health care mistrust in Alberta," by CalgaryHeralddotcom at 2:36 (video and audio extracted)

held shot

editing note: for the first time no slow-motion added to Duckett's video image

transition: jump cut to scene 23

Scene: 23 Time: 1:07–1:09 Length: 2 seconds

visual content: boardroom, phone, water, glass, wall

characters seen: Duckett

voices heard: Duckett, Trace Adkins

script: (spoken by Duckett, sung by Adkins): Duckett: "…Just making it up…" Adkins: "…know it now…"

SOT

source: "Health Czar Stephen Duckett on Health care mistrust in Alberta," by CalgaryHeralddotcom at 1:13 (video and audio extracted)

held shot

editing note: slow-motion not added to original video of Duckett;

transition: straight cut to scene 24

Scene: 24 Time: 1:09–1:10 Length: 2 seconds

visual content: boardroom wall, red executive chair, NBC bug

characters seen: Donald Trump

voices heard: Donald Trump

script (spoken by Trump to Adkins instrumental music): Trump [pounds desk]:
"…Stephen, you're fired."
SOT
source: NBC "Celebrity Apprentice"
held shot
transition: straight cut to scene 25

Scene: 25 Time: 1:11–1:13 Length: 2 seconds
visual content: boardroom, phone, water, glass, wall
characters seen: Duckett
voices heard: Duckett, Trace Adkins
script (sung to accompanying country music): Trace Adkins: "…But, you're gonna miss this."
source: "Health Czar Stephen Duckett on Health care mistrust in Alberta," by CalgaryHeralddotcom at 1:00 (video only extracted)
VO
held shot
editing note: slow-motion added to original video of Duckett; action and reaction by firing and pointing and recoiling and grimace, underlined by physical orientation of Trump and Duckett in screen
transition: cross blur to scene 26

Scene: 26 Time: 1:14–1:18 Length: 4 seconds
visual content: closing credit graphic in typeface TBD: a twin dogs production
script (instrumental country music)
pull shot
transition: straight cut to scene 27

Scene: 27 Time: 1:19–1:19 Length: <1 second
visual content: black

Scene: 28
Video assemblage

Third Meditation: More Incongruousness

In the appended remix artist interview, Robert McKoen reveals that he finds in Cookie Exchange a fundamental contradiction between the adult-professional status and childish behaviour of Stephen Duckett, a tension he goes on to exploit visually in his communicative remix vehicle, Goodbye, Goodbye. “He’s not going to answer anyone’s questions, ’cos he’s gotta finish his cookie, and how ridiculous is that?” McKoen says of Duckett, sounding the ridiculousness for this sense of something not fitting. “You know, you’re not a kid. You’re not a kid who’s running into the corner, or, ‘I’m going to eat my cookie.’ No, you’re a grown adult. And you’re treating everyone else, um, yeah, he’s become, he’s kidlike.” Perceiving that Duckett somehow participates simultaneously in both adulthood and childhood, McKoen positions himself in the tradition of the incongruity theory of humour, the basic tenet of which is, according to Berger, “in the most general sense, some sort of difference between what one expects and what one gets” and “probably the most important and widely accepted of the explanations of humor” (1993, p. 3).

Incongruity-inducing humour has been with us since the very start. Rose locates the concept of incongruity at the core of parody, a tradition that can be traced back at least as far as the Batrochomyomachia, a work attributed by some to Homer in which a mock epic battle between frogs and mice that is ended only by Zeus is described. For the ancient Greeks, Rose (1993) says, [parody] could imitate both the form and the subject-matter of the heroic epics, and then create humour by then rewriting plot or characters so that there was some comic contrast with the more ‘serious’ epic form of the work and/or create comedy by mixing references to the more serious aspects and characters of the epic with comically lowly and inappropriate figures from the everyday or animal world" (p. 15). What an ancient reader expected by way of content, given the form of the epic poem, was not realized; instead, a kind of crookedness or dissonance (frogs and mice instead of heroes) was delivered. Of course, the humour then and now also springs from being invited to a perspective from which the heroism of the high heroes may be unmasked and seen to contain elements of the lower life forms. Then as now, Gray teaches, comedy is inherently intertextual. It collides disparate discourses and "always invites at least some degree of critical intertextuality, for when we laugh, we acknowledge having moved with the joke to other territory, and having been treated to an alternative view of that that territory" (quoted in Gurney, 2011, June, p. 112). In one way or another, to a lesser or higher degree, this spotlighting of the work of incongruity pervades the literature of laughter.

Lynch observes that "jokes and laughter may…stem from the recognition that something is inconsistent with the expected rational nature of the perceived environment" (2002, p. 428). For Palmer, as explained by Gurney, the appearance of humour requires "a logical balance of congruity and incongruity" (cited in Gurney, 2011, p. 4). This theme also runs through the arguments of Hall, Keeter and Williamson (1993), when, commenting on Zijderveld's *Sociology of Humor and Laughter,* they say that "circumstances can be reversed so that meanings come out quite differently, unexpected, incongruous or ordered in such a way as to change the normalcy of the situation" (p. 2). Others, who focus their insights on the fittingness of the things that don't fit, nevertheless build their analysis on that prior incongruity. We see this in Ewick and Sibley (2000), who underline in their presentation Douglas's statement that the pattern of a joke “brings into relation *disparate elements* [emphasis added] in such a way that one accepted pattern is challenged by the appearance of another which in some way was hidden in the first” (p. 561). Billig (2005) reminds us that this note was sounded centuries before by Hutcheson, who, in *Thoughts on Laughter* (1758), said wit consisted in the bringing together of “images which have contrary additional ideas, as well as some resemblance in the principal idea” (cited in Billig, p. 64). Smith, in 1864, pinpointed the cause of laughter as “incongruity, or the conjunction of objects and circumstances not usually combined” (cited in Billig, p. 64). On this question, Campbell, in 1776, provided another pre-modern voice, contending that “incongruous affinity” is the “proper object of laughter” and that wit hits its target when objects that are “apparently the most dissimilar and heterogenous” are connected (cited in Billig, p. 64). Palmer also seeks to draw a conclusion about the human ability to host “the coexistence of two syllogisms” (cited in Gurney, 2011, p. 4), the one plausible and sensical, the other implausible and nonsensical in the production of comic tension and laughter, but, here, too, that hypothesis stems from the original incongruity implied in the dualities.

In Berger’s *An Anatomy of Humor,* this dissection of laughter also reveals the incongruities that lie within. The work features a glossary of the techniques of humour, which Berger also terms the morphology of the joke-tale, that gathers into four distinct categories (language, logic, identity, action) the 45 ways that humour works. Six main techniques relevant to the Duckett Cookie Episode share a common connection to the concept of incongruity that will be explored further below. To frame that discussion, let us employ Berger (1993) to note that humour, when produced by *analogy*, is “based on some kind of invidious comparison” and in its more sophisticated manifestation involves "an elaborate metaphor in which seemingly incongruous elements are united" (p. 22). When humour deals in *caricature,* the incongruity consists in "the ludicrousness and grotesque representation of people by exaggeration of their characteristic features and, at the same time, a retention of likeness" (p. 26). The comic *catalogue* is a standard technique that makes it possible "to use nonsense, funny names and various kinds of incongruities and 'hide' all this in the catalogue" (p. 27). Referring to a textbook example of cataloging employed by Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby,* Berger states there is "a sense of incongruity at having these 'animals' …at a 'high class' party" (p. 27). The echo of incongruity is also heard in the manner of *catalogue's* producing humour that is "based on the difference between what is customary, 'normal,' or what we are used to and what we find when we experience the abnormal of the deviant" (p. 32). In *impersonation*, the book of humour is again published in the grammar of incongruity. In impersonation, says Berger, laugher is generated by "the incongruity between the actual qualifications of the impersonator and his pretended ones, and the way people react to him because of his appropriated qualifications and status" (p. 38). Intriguingly for students of the Duckett Cookie Episode, Berger allows for this manner of comic incongruity to be either voluntary or involuntary, the latter coming to pass when "a person makes a mistake, does not realize that he is impersonating someone…and rather fantastic consequences result" (p. 38). The incongruity contained in the technique of *mimicry* participates in a kind of temporal incongruity that sees "a person maintaining his own identity while, at the same time, 'stealing' or 'borrowing' the identity of others" (p. 42). Berger says *satire,* which has long been understood to be one of the most important literary forms of humour, finds, essentially, the status quo as being not in agreement with what can be imagined as a more sane, more healthy, more salutary, more natural order of conducting public affairs. Asking us to find this incongruity between what is and what could or should be, "the satirist," says Berger, "is critical and implies that the social order need not be as it is and that many people (in the professions and in positions of power) are really fools and cranks" (p. 50). Other techniques of humour in the morphology, including *parody, infantalism and literalness*, also deal in incongruity, according to Berger, who, admittedly, does make room for other perspectives on humour that do not accord incongruity the status of prime mover of laughter. But the frequent appearances and suggestions of incongruity in Berger's analysis, support the view that inconsistency, disharmoniousness, impropriety and unconformity—in a word, incongruity—are behind and somehow a main cause of humour.

In this brief survey of the appearances of incongruity in the humour literature, it is important not to gloss over the teaching, embedded in many of the references, that humour is not just the product of two dissimilar elements being considered together as much as the sudden and unexpected bringing of them together. That is, timing is a consideration, both for those who would make us laugh in word or image, and those who explain how and why. Lefcourt defines humour as discourse that "brings together two disparate ideas, concepts or situations in a surprising or unexpected manner" (cited in Hubler & Bell, 2003, p. 278)

In 1689, in that essay on human understanding, Locke said wit was powered by the "assemblage of ideas…putting these together with quickness and variety." In 1854, Kames said that wit is a "junction of things by distant and fanciful relations, which surprise because they are unexpected" (cited in Billig, 2005, p. 64). And then in 2011, that understanding of the connection between laughter and suddenness still carried currency as Gurney proclaimed that “the most prevalent and widely-applicable strain of theory is incongruity, which holds that the essence of humor is sudden surprise or the subversion of expectation” (2011, June, p. 100).

These many and varied voices that are agreed on the role of sudden incongruity in humour accord us a richer perspective with which to return to Goodbye, Goodbye. Starting with Berger’s typology, we find visual evidence of an overarching analogic incongruity in Stephen Duckett the human being being likened in the editing process to a Muppet character. “Introduced in the 1950s on various television programs, the Muppets are known for their zany, absurdist humor and outlandish, distinctive looks,” reads an explanatory panel to a Muppets exhibit, which includes Cookie Monster, at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Also evident in Goodbye, Goodbye is the incongruity of caricature communicated, in part, by a slow-motion video effect that exaggerates Duckett’s motions as he displays the cookie. As well, there is the comic incongruity of catalogue that, interestingly, borrows Fitzgerald’s technique of using an animal (in this case, a Muppet) as a means of commenting on the abnormal likeness between Duckett and Cookie Monster, although, admittedly, there appears to be very little effort from the remix artist to disguise the likeness. Of course, there is the comic incongruity of impersonation suggested by Goodbye, Goodbye, as the remix artist puts the purported qualifications of the Alberta Health Services president and chief executive officer to the test, and, with the spliced “confession” of Duckett in Scenes 22 and 23 (“That’s what our job is…Just making it up.”) and the appropriated desk-pounding judgment from Donald Trump in Scene 24 (“Stephen, you’re fired”) finds him lacking.

It remains safe to suggest that, as Berger allowed, the impersonation that the remix artist makes Duckett participate is involuntary on Duckett's part. Duckett himself speaks to this in his apology news release in which he both admits "I know I got it wrong this time" and seeks to re-establish his qualifications as the AHS leader by referring to the meeting he had just emerged from as the site of great progress made by "clinical and operational leaders to develop new protocols to reduce Emergency Department wait times." Known to neither Duckett nor the great YouTube community was the fact that within five days of those comments would come Berger's "rather fantastic consequences" in the shape of rmthespian's C is for Cookie and Goodbye, Goodbye remixes. And the incongruity used by mimicry is also visible in the latter remix, for Duckett and Cookie Monster move in a mix of time through which Duckett keeps his own identity but it made to borrow the identity of both the Cookie Monster and a participant in a Donald Trump reality show. Berger's morphology also includes satire, and this architectonic kind of incongruity is made to infuse every second of Goodbye, Goodbye, asking or forcing viewers to conclude that if the powerful and knowledgeable Stephen Duckett can be portrayed as a childish fool and crank, then the public arena and its public servants are not in the healthy shape they could and should be.

The televisual format that gives rise to remixed videos, including Goodbye, Goodbye, is uniquely positioned to deliver, powerfully, a brand of unexpected, comic incongruity. The literature teaches us it was this way in the beginning, in video's roots in film. On this point, Gurney (2011, June) cites Gunning's "Non-Continuity, Continuity and Discontinuity" where early cinema storytelling "consists of a narrative in at least two shots, in which the disruption caused by the cut(s) is used to express a disruption on the story level of the film" (p. 122). Gurney illustrates this with the example from 1900 of George Albert Smith's *Let Me Dream Again*, in which a black-and-white scene of a jovial, middle-aged man and an equally jovial masked woman are seen caressing each other as they laugh, drink and smoke and, generally, present a picture of the marriage of true minds. The scene, quickly revealed to be a dream, dissolves though a now-crude but still effective focus effect to a scene of the same man, now in real life, now in bed next to his shapeless, hectoring wife, and now miserable. The point is that the edit itself communicates the shock of suddenness that, as seen in the literature, is an essential element of comedic incongruity. This can be clearly seen in Goodbye, Goodbye's timeline where quick digital cuts—the term itself can connote an abrupt departure from a previous state—are placed between scenes of Stephen Duckett and scenes of Cookie Monster, inviting viewers to register incongruities of many shapes and sizes.

Some of those incongruities, those made to stand still by Berger's analysis, that is, have already been considered above, but there are other crookednesses, those that move into view on video's power to make them collide quickly. For instance, in Goodbye, Goodbye's Scene 1 the viewer is presented with a clash of video and audio that contains a collision of genres: the viewer sees the familiar image of the moving television news scrum in which a central figure is surrounded by reporters and microphones but hears a soundtrack not of the voices of the principals in the frame but, rather, of the unembodied voice of Cookie Monster from Sesame Street. That rapidly introduced dissonance quickly gives way to another incongruity, as the expected flow of news reportage (viewers familiar with television news would anticipate either a continuation of the scrum or an edit to a reporter's question or to a Duckett answer) forks from a setting in which human beings are walking down a hotel corridor to one where Muppet characters human and animal are singing and playing instruments in a barnyard.

This man-Muppet incongruity continues through the first 20 scenes, and can be comprehended in a deeper circle of richness by summoning the help of Bolter and Grusin's (2000) concepts of immediacy and hypermediacy. Immediacy, the authors explain, is achieved when a medium attempts to ignore or deny "the presence of the medium and the act of mediation. All of them seek to put the view in the same space as the objects viewed" (p. 16). At the other end of the aesthetic spectrum, hypermediacy rejects this attempted dissolving of the medium, calling "overt attention to the medium as a force in shaping content" (cited in Gurney, 2011, June, p. 106). Gurney helps decipher Bolter and Grusin by characterizing the news media as falling toward the pole of immediacy, as it tends to "present its reports as largely self-contained, episodic rather than serial, in an effort to present content in a mode of temporal and textual immediacy" (p. 106). This is the message emitted by the visual of the Duckett scrum or, for that matter, any television news image of piece of sound. And that message to the viewer is this: you are here as this happens. But when a soundbite from the Cookie Monster skit is added, the remix artist communicates hypermedially, essentially subverting the power of the TV news genre's immediacy by jamming it. The remix artist openly draws attention to the fact that this new work is a manufactured work. The remix artist does intend the viewer to be somewhere, but that somewhere is different that the television reporter intends that viewer to be. Gurney finds this logic at work in *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart, where, routinely, news soundbites are plucked from their original contexts and married together to produce original perspectives on the both the political actors portrayed and the non-critical acquiesence of the conventional media. “By redacting together such soundbites, *TDS* employs a logic of hypermediacy, exploiting the incongruity produced for the sake of humor and enlightenment” (p. 106). Goodbye, Goodbye’s sudden incongruities viewed through the lens of Bolter and Grusin can be seen in scenes 22 and 23 and again in scenes 24 and 25, when, in both cases, a hypermedial twist is given to the remix. In the former, Duckett’s own words are lifted from another context and used to indict himself (“That’s what our job is…just making it up”), and, then, in the latter, Duckett’s image is transported into Donald Trump’s reality show as the civil servant is symbolically release “by name” (“Stephen, you’re fired) by the tycoon. Courtesy the perspective afforded by ancient and modern voices, with Hobbes, Billig and Campbell, with Schopenhauer, Lefcourt and Locke and Kames and Gurney, we are able to see that while the Goodbye, Goodbye remix participates in the latest technology, its ability to reach and communicate with viewers flows from its elegance in delivering a sudden surprise in the presenting of a comic incongruity. With the tools of digital editing at his or her disposal, the modern remix artist is uniquely armed to create those sensations of incongruity, that, as we have briefly glimpsed, manifest as incongruities of man versus Muppet, TV news versus children’s entertainment, and of immediacy versus hypermediacy.

Always a possibility as long as an observer can hold two seemingly unrelated thoughts in his or her head at the same time, incongruity is made visually manifest in strange new and powerful ways—the remix—thanks to the affordances of new media. The literature provides Manovich as illumination in this matter. Manovich (2003) has delineated five principles of new media, namely numerical representation, variability, modularity, automation, and transcoding. These propositions, the first of which concern us most in our questioning of Goodbye, Goodbye, combine to make for what Gurney (2011, June) terms a “greater ease in breaking up and critiquing or repurposing media texts” (p. 216). And this breaking up or segmenting or cleaving is what is required for the visual juxtaposition that remix relies on. Manovich deduces these new media tendencies from “the basic fact of digital representation of media” (p. 17), which he contends is the reduction of new media to digital data. “Once an image is represented as a matrix of numbers,” he says, “it can be manipulated or even generated automatically by running various algorithms, such as sharpen, blue, colorize, change contrast, etc.” (p. 17). To this list of commands, those who study political remixes in general or Goodbye, Goodbye in particular might add make incongruous and make laugh. Gurney (2011, June) brings home the lesson. “One thing that digital code, or ‘numerical representation’ as Manovich terms it, allows for is greater ease in the actual cleaving work of segmentation” (cited in Gurney, p. 216). In the age of analog media, Gurney teaches, what was needed for the media manipulator beyond a sharp wit was “a significant investment in terms of time and/or money in order to work directly with the material of the recording or use instruments that would allow for rerecording (which typically leads to significant degradation in fidelity)” (p. 216). So, not only can incongruity be made more visual and more compelling in the new medium of video remix, but, it can also be made less dear in terms of time and money. That is bound to be a winning mixture for the political wit set who are as good with ones and zeroes as they are with ABCs.

Manovich goes on to cast remixes, such as Goodbye, Goodbye, as encoded artifacts of a modernist avant garde movement. And, here, too, the socially accepted, technological manipulation made possible by new media's numerical representation is at the core of the analysis, in which Manovich is careful to distinguish 1920s avant garde sensibilities from the new avant garde. Whereas the prior avant garde sought new forms and new ways to represent reality and see what is out there, "the new media avant garde is about new ways of accessing and manipulating information. Its techniques are hypermedia, databases, search engines, data mining, image processing, visualization, and simulation" (2003, p. 22). A critical assessment of this comparison of avant garde movements is not our intention, and, certainly, beyond our abilities, but it is introduced only to reinforce the observation that new media, from Manovich's perspective, is about "accessing and using in new ways previously accumulated media" (p. 22). This point of view from the literature allows us to see Goodbye, Goodbye as a participant in that impulse of manipulation in which digitized segments of media are mixed together to simulate a story that arrests the viewer with its incongruity, as Cookie Monster stands in for the cookie-holding Duckett.

Consider more closely the effect of this segmenting and cleaving made possible by digitized media when it comes to the particular artifact before us, the Goodbye, Goodbye remix. As Heath, Hindmarsh and Luff (2010) point out, "producing these simple catalogues can be time-consuming, but they can provide useful vehicles when returning to the corpus to identify where events occur or when looking for particular phenomena" (p. 63). And they point to some of what is happening in Goodbye, Goodbye.

Exhibit 4

The Cleaver's Touch

1. The remix is significantly shorter than the source video:

Length of original CTV video Cookie Exchange: 2:14 seconds
Length of Goodbye, Goodbye remix: 1:19 seconds

2. The remix focuses on Duckett:
Approximate percentage of time Duckett is on screen in Cookie Exchange: 95.4
Approximate percentage of time Duckett is on screen in Goodbye, Goodbye: 50

3. The remix also focuses on the cookie:
Approximate percentage of time cookie is visible in Cookie Exchange: 26
Approximate percentage of time cookie is visible in Goodbye, Goodbye: 62

4. The remix involves source-video manipulation:
Number of scenes Duckett is seen in slow motion in Cookie Exchange: 0
Number of scenes Duckett is seen in slow motion in Goodbye, Goodbye: 11
Approximate percentage of time Duckett seen in slow motion in Cookie Exchange: 0
Approximate percentage of time Duckett seen in slow motion in Goodbye, Goodbye: 30

5. The remix relies on editorial subtraction:
Number of words Duckett speaks in Cookie Exchange: 91
Number of words Duckett speaks in Goodbye, Goodbye: 9
Number of words from Cookie Exchange Duckett speaks in Goodbye, Goodbye: 0

Number of reporters' questions heard in Cookie Exchange: 13
Number of Duckett questions heard in Cookie Exchange: 3
Number of reporters' and Duckett questions heard in Goodbye, Goodbye: 0

6. The remix relies on editorial addition:
Sources of video, audio and graphics in Cookie Exchange: 1
Sources of video, audio and graphics in Goodbye, Goodbye: 8

Percentage of time music is heard in Cookie Exchange: 0
Approximate percentage of time music is heard in Goodbye, Goodbye: 94

Percentage of time Muppets are on screen in Cookie Exchange: 0
Approximate percentage of time Muppets are on screen in Goodbye, Goodbye: 43

7. The remix features a meld of time:
Sources of video, audio, graphics (year of origin) in Cookie Exchange: 2010
Sources of video, audio, graphics (years of origin) in Goodbye, Goodbye: 1981, 2008, 2009, 2010

8. The remix is a combination of two or more pre-existing videos and/or audio sources into a new derivative work:
Percentage of video run time involving combination of discrete media sources in Cookie Exchange: 0
Approximate percentage of video run time involving combination of discrete media sources in Goodbye, Goodbye: 42

There is much here that can be dug into, but of immediate interest is the manipulation captured in item 3 as the remix artist transforms Duckett Cookie Exchange into Goodbye, Goodbye, using the cookie and the incongruity it is made to represent—an adult behaving childishly—as its means. For item 3 lays clear the fact that, although the cookie grabbed the attention of many Cookie Exchange viewers, it is actually on the screen for only approximately one quarter of the video's run time. But that changes on the road to the remix, in which it is on the screen for approximately 62 per cent of the new work's run time. This foregrounding of the cookie occurs as other Cookie Exchange elements are left behind by the remix artist. For instance, there is nothing in the remix that reflects Duckett's take on the ridiculousness of the reporters. This foregrounding of the cookie in the remix is achieved through the editing effect of slow-motion, as at the 0:04-second mark where Duckett's hand motion with the cookie is slowed down to synchronize with the arrival of the lyric "cookie" in song. And the foregrounding of the cookie in the remix is further strengthened by the importation of extracts of the Cookie Monster video, in which the Muppet is always seen either holding or chewing or singing about a cookie. For the viewer, it is an exposure to the picture of cookie at a rate significantly higher than the source video. For students of the remix who are formed by the literature, especially Manovich's contribution to it, it is compelling evidence of the power provided by new media's extractable and segmentable nature. It is the nature that either invites or encourages or permits or exploits the fragmentariness of the seemingly but deceptively discrete entity that is Cookie Exchange.

Barthes's contribution to the literature underlines this observation about the openness of media and the potential plurality of its readings when it is composed of patterns of digital ones and zeroes, and, again, Gurney serves as guide at this point. We learn that in *S/Z*, Barthes pronounces on the gradations between "readerly" and "writerly" texts. Barthes's readerly text "is a text that asks little creativity of the reader, whereas the writerly text is one in which the reader essentially functions in a writing role, fleshing out meanings and contexts of the text before them through the reading process" (cited in Gurney, 2011, June. p. 211). Gurney contends that viral videos "in their almost constitutively promiscuous nature, are best understood as heavily favoring the openness of writerly texts" (p. 211), a judgement we concur with when considering the manner in which the remix artist oversaw the leaking of elements from Cookie Exchange into Goodbye, Goodbye.

But, as exhibit 3, line 3 suggests, not just any elements get this privileged treatment. In Goodbye, Goodbye, this special status was accorded to the image of the cookie. Barthes, in *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, introduces the concept of the "punctum," which Gurney (2011, June) translates as "an image that stands out to or metaphorically pierces a certain viewer though it might go by unnoticed by others" (p. 221). In Goodbye, Goodbye, the punctum is the cookie. The lesson, though, is the distance we have travelled technologically since Barthes's time. As Gurney makes clear, "perceiving that something stands out within the experience of a larger text has not always meant that it could be easily shared with others. In fact, Barthes goes to great lengths in discussing the subjective experience of punctum and how it can’t likely be shared” (p. 221). But the art of the remixer, and the editing tools at her or his disposal, and the affordances of new media that play host to a simpler process of extraction and segmentation, put a significant dent in this difficulty.

In this essay, we have explored the literature of comic incongruity and digital media and we are now prepared to return to where we started and see their likenesses as if for the first time. Humour, according to strong and consistent voices in the literature, is built on the sense of incongruity. This does not mean that every incongruous situation will be funny, but, only, rather, that what is funny will rarely not contain an incongruity. And that is a sufficient conclusion to draw from the voices and writings of the past, because our goal here is not to provide the definitive perspective on the comic as much as to display how its reliance on incongruity could be expected to blossom in our digital age. New media, after all, shares with the comic’s affinity for the incongruous, a unique ability to deliver that humour, as its practitioners, such as the remix artist and the remix artist behind Goodbye, Goodbye, cleave and segment and extract and present, visually, on the monitors in front of us and not just in the screens in our heads, the difference between what one expects and what one gets.

Fourth Meditation: Sharing

Of the curious collision five days before between Stephen Duckett and Edmonton conventional media reporters on the sidewalks of downtown Edmonton, then-premier Ed Stelmach shared and we have already briefly sampled this assessment in the provincial legislature on November 24, 2010: "I think everyone in Alberta watched and saw the offensive comments. I'll just leave it at that." Allowing for the exaggeration in the use of "everyone," Stelmach's characterization of the breadth of viewing of Cookie Exchange and its remix offspring nevertheless underlines an aspect of the encounter and its aftermath that bears some scrutiny. It is obvious by this point that more is happening in the Duckett Cookie Episode than technologically enabled wit or comic incongruity captured on video or a high stakes battle for the ground of the ridiculous. A key social function is also evident: sharing. The witty, the incongruous, the ridiculous, the humorous, all of these concepts have the added dimension of our participation in them. As Cohen (1999) makes clear in an observation ratified in the experience of everyday life, "every joke-lover knows, when he hears a good joke, to whom he will go to tell it" (p. ix). And whether presented as a key attribute of the millennial age cohort (Winograd & Hais, 2008), an affordance of the collective and network approach to media (Bruns, 2009), a basic impulse allowed freer rein by modern technology's social tools (Shirky, 2009), a defining characteristic of our age of interaction, conversation and easy and agreeable democratic sociability (Schudson, 2008), a commonplace tradition of the ancient, oral world where intertextuality and its borrowing and adapting and its deliberate creating of texts out of other texts (Ong, 2000), or a built-in feature of YouTube that helps account for its popularity, sharing is a theme that has attracted and continues to attract the attention of numerous observers and scholars of our social, political and technological times. The most popular social media platforms are replete with affordances for sharing. Facebook invites users to “like,” “comment on” or “share” each picture or message posted. YouTube prominently features “about,” “share,” and “add” to links under each posted video. Twitter doesn’t use the word share in its interface, but the central “retweet” option is informed by this sharing impulse. Flickr allows its viewers to “share” images through email, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Tumblr. But the ubiquity of online sharing veils the significant theoretical work done offline by thinkers we might now refer to as pioneers in the theory of virality, including two we have already encountered, sociolinguist William Labov and speech act theorist Mary Louise Pratt. It was Pratt who found that at the heart of Labov’s tellable assertions was the idea of a tellee, and what happens between teller and tellee is the social act of sharing, the intention “to share his wonder, amusement, terror, or admiration of the event. Ultimately, it would seem, what he is after is an interpretation of the problematic event, an assignment of meaning and value supported by the consensus of himself and his hearers. (p. xxx)

This fundamental, and, one might add, political mechanism at the core of sharing has, in our time, exploded into conceptual significance, fueled by the technology that makes sharing so prevalent and so obvious. When the Alberta premier looked back on the Duckett Cookie Episode and offered the dual assessment that “it showed how quickly a comment like that could go viral in social media, not only in Alberta but around the world,” it is easy to hear and apply the words of Douglas Rushkoff. In Media Virus! (1994), Rushkoff, an American media theorist and writer and Locke-level metaphor manufacturer, uses the term datasphere to describe “the circulatory system for today’s information, ideas, and images” to which, (and here the biological metaphor is extended), “as individuals we are each *exposed*…whenever we *come into contact* [emphases added] with communications technology such as television, computer networks, magazines, video games, fax machines, radio shows, CDs, or videocassettes,” a list that can be updated to include video streaming platforms such as YouTube, and popular social media sites, including Facebook and Twitter. Characteristic of this datasphere is its propensity to host the spreading or sharing of what Rushkoff calls information, ideas, and images. Rushkoff exploits this sense of the spreadability of media by choosing a metaphor that has stuck: the virus. Of course, he insists that he is not dealing in metaphor (“This term is not being used as a metaphor. These media events are not *like* viruses. They *are* viruses.”) but that protestation notwithstanding, Rushkoff does, in choosing the viral image, attach his analysis to what is now the most powerful way to understand and approach how media moves from person to person along passageways in the datasphere or in social networks, including those conduits that exposed Cookie Exchange, C Is For Cookie and Goodbye, Goodbye to hundreds of thousands of viewers.

The viral sharing metaphor continues to attract the attention and analysis of contemporary theorists of communication. Speaking of Rushkoff’s formulation, Gurney says that “the sense that there is some ideological code, or meme, housed within an attractive bit of cultural code is an apt way to begin thinking about a media virus.” This is Gurney’s salute to Rushkoff’s detour into elementary virology, a summary of which is helpful at this point.

> The attacking virus uses its protective and sticky protein casing to latch onto a healthy cell and then inject its own

> genetic code, essentially genes, inside. The virus code mixes and competes for control with the cell's own genes, and, if victorious, it permanently alters the way the cell functions and reproduces. A particularly virulent strain will transform the host cell into a factory that replicates the virus.

Rushkoff's argument is informed throughout by the sense of a virus as a bellicose pathogen. He characterizes the viral action as "a *battle for command* of the cell, *fought* between the cell's own genetic programming (DNA) and the virus's *invading* code." The invading virus has a "better chance of *taking over*" when the cell's existing codes are weak or confused. "It can't recognize that is is being *attacked* and can't *mobilize its defenses*," says Rushkoff, who then likens the protein shell of a virus to "the Trojan horse" immortalized in tales from Greek warfare. "The genetic codes," Rushkoff continues, "are the *soldiers* hidden inside, *battling* our own genes in an attempt to change the way our cells operate." The militarism of Rushkoff's virus turns out to contain imperialistic tendencies, and blindly structural ones at that. Says Rushkoff: "The only 'intention of the virus, if it can be said to have one, is to spread its own code as far and wide as possible—from cell to cell and organism to organism" [all emphases added]. For his part, Gurney makes the important point that the relationship between the virus and the host cell can be viewed obviously as one of parasitic dependency but also, and more interestingly, as one of unwitting complicity. A virus is not a bacterium; it needs a symbiotic host. "The biological action of a virus takes place once it attaches to a host cell, where it is able to release its genetic material and use the host's organelles to replicate the materials which will eventually assemble into new viruses," says Gurney, who then draws the key connection between the virus and its spreadability. "The biological virus is a figure that both inserts itself and its genetic code into a host and then quickly transforms the infected into a vector of contagion—a vector increased in potency by the ties of the social network within which an infected individual operates."

The lesson of this lesson in elementary virology is its connotations transfer smoothly from the realm of biology to media and communication studies. When Rushkoff says that the protein shell of a media virus might be "an event, invention, technology, system of thought, musical riff, visual image, scientific theory, sex scandal, clothing style or even a pop hero—as long as it can catch our attention," or when Gurney says "the social transmission of cultural texts has always depended upon the ability of an individual, group, and/or institution to create desirable texts and to describe the values of and attributes of those texts to prospective audiences," each has made Locke's leap of wit. Gurney admits as much, saying the social sharing of cultural texts "often involves suggesting parallels between those texts and prior ones or developing categories…that suggest homologies among texts in shorthand." It remains now to apply this Rushkoff-Gurney-virus framework to the Duckett Cookie Episode, and, specifically, the Goodbye, Goodbye remix, where we learn how quickly and effectively the virus is shared. Doing so demands a radical shift of thought away from Duckett as an individual human being who is asked questions by reporters to the sense of Duckett as something closer to a thing. In this we are led not only by Rushkoff and Gurney but by the reporter d'Aliesio who, at the 1:50 mark of Cookie Exchange, intuits the same sense, saying: "Why is that the *image* [emphasis added] you're wanting to portray to Albertans, that you're eating a cookie?" It might, indeed, be a radical shift to allow Duckett to be transformed into an image, but it also appears that Rushkoff was right because that image was spread and was shared and was, according to the highest elected official in the province, watched and seen by everyone in Alberta.

One of those people attracted by that image of Duckett eating a cookie was the Edmonton remix artist, rmthespian. Following the basic virology introduced above, it was rmthespian who was infected by or whose imagination became host to the attractive—because incongruous, and because incongruous tellable and shareable—protein shell of a health care official waving a cookie in the faces of reporters. As Rushkoff says, the more provocative an image or icon—like the videotaped police beating or a new rap lyric for that matter—the further and faster it will travel through the datasphere." But it is also important to understand at this point the incompleteness of Rushkoff's theme of the virus as the attacking entity. Because the image of Duckett eating a cookie does not necessarily have to overwhelm the defences of a remix artist as much as present itself to the host who takes the opportunity to employ its own mechanisms and organelles to metaphorically replicate itself and form a new virus. The mechanism can be seen as the imagination of the remix artist who finds a likeness between Duckett's behavior and the mindless behavior of the Cookie Monster, that popular Sesame Street chaos Muppet who, according to Lithwick, stands along with fellow Muppets Ernie, Grover, Gonzo, Dr. Bunsen Honeydew and, paradigmatically, Animal, and represents, in opposition to the neuroticism and regimentation of Bert, Scooter, Sam the Eagle and Kermit the Frog, an approach to life's situation that is "out-of-control, emotional, volatile." This is what Humphrey, quoted in Dawkins's The Selfish Gene, means by saying, "when you plant a fertile meme in my mind you literally parasitize my brain, turning it into a vehicle for the meme's propagation in just the way that a virus may parasitize the genetic mechanism of a host cell." And that propagation proceeds from mind and imagination into the hands of the remix artist, connected to the organelles that are the specialized suite of editing equipment and software he used to combine the image and sound of Duckett with those of the Cookie Monster and, in the case of Goodbye, Goodbye, other Muppets and entertainment personalities. The remix artist rmthespian should not be understood to be a passive recipient of the Duckett virus or as a recipient who has little say in his own infection. In fact, it is apparent that he is willingly infected and willingly permits the transformation of the virus, in both his imagination and his editing suite, into a new viruses—the Duckett remixes—that are spread, when posted, in turn, to YouTube across rmthespian's social network and those social networks of those who also shared and spread the remix videos. Of this complicity in being infected, Jenkins, Ford and Green improve on Rushkoff's original position when, in *Spreadable Media: Creating Value And Meaning in a Networked Culture*, they consciously sought to avoid "the metaphors of 'infection' and 'contamination,' which overestimate the power of media companies and underestimate the agency of audiences." by the ties of the social network within which an infected individual operates." The datasphere we inhabit now, the authors stress, allows and foregrounds the ability of audience members to retrofit media to better serve their interests. "As material spreads," they write, "it gets remade: either literally, through various forms of sampling and remixing, or figuratively, via its insertion into ongoing conversations and across various platforms. This continuous process of repurposing and recirculating is eroding the perceived divides between production and consumption."

There is something curious in those sentences from Jenkins et al that invite a brief interrogation at this point. Or, rather, what is curious is what isn't in those sentences from

Jenkins. That is, those two sentences—As material spreads, it gets remade; either literally, through various forms of sampling and remixing, or figuratively, via its insertion into ongoing conversations and across various platforms and The continuous process of repurposing and recirculating is eroding the perceived divides between production and consumption—smuggle in a sense that the operative agent in all of this spreading and sharing of media is not a human being, but the content itself. *Material* spreads and is remade. *Sampling* and *remixing* facilitate this as part of a continuous *process* of repurposing. This sense of the eclipse of the author is encountered across the literature of media virality. And it should come as little surprise, given that Rushkoff himself in passing noted that viruses, as they are understood by the medical community, "are unlike bacteria or germs because they are not living things." This sense that the metaphorical virus is somehow the thing also informs the writing of Gurney and leads to his own answer-question some 233 pages into his June 2011 dissertation, Infectious Culture: Virality, Comedy, and Transmediality in the Digital Age. Consider this: "In order for joke exchanges to work, there must be common cultural foundations that allow them to succeed," Gurney writes. "In addition, it serves to highlight why joke sharing is such a 'viral' enterprise. Like a virus, laughter, or at the very least the internal perception of the comic, is something that once it manifests in an individual seems to want to branch outward to more hosts. It is infectious." The noteworthy is the obvious, and that is Gurney's ascribing a kind of agency to the perception of the comic; that is, *not* necessarily the perceiver of the comic. *It* wants to branch outward to more hosts. We have travelled, it seems, a theoretical distance from from Rushkoff, whose media virus was constructed and applied more consciously, either as a Trojan Horse or as a syringe.

Of the latter image, Rushkoff says, “the way a virus is administered is as important as the construction of the virus itself.” As well, we have travelled a distance from Pratt, who also gave the sharer pride of place in the conception of the shared content as something the is told, contemplated, evaluated and responded to, all of which implies a teller, contemplator, evaluator and responder.

There is much to commend itself in the view of viral technology that argues for its making for more room for more participants, more tellers, contemplators, evaluators and responders, whether that is through the mysterious action of the shared content itself or through the combined action of more sharers. Prime among these benefits is the challenge that this openness to participation levels at the easy and automatic acceptance and inheritance of the authorial voice that produces a containable product. The very fact that a video can be shared, easily shared along social networks, and, importantly, altered in that sharing, all of this combines to dent the sense that the orginator of a work somehow has produced and can protect a discrete object. This view assails the premise contained in the politician’s pronouncement captured above—“it showed how quickly a comment like that could go viral in social media, not only in Alberta but around the world. It just distractracted for that period of time the good things that were happening, the announcements made”—that there is a message and its author is the powerful gatekeeper, in this case the premier of the province of Alberta. And this view dents the premise contained in the official’s pronouncement captured from the 1:06 mark to the 1:22 mark of Cookie Exchange, the passage in which Duckett makes clear that he believes there is one proper channel for communication that, basically, corresponds to his view of that one proper channel for communication. “Now, let me say this you,” Duckett tells reporters as part of the brief clash over the ridiculous. “We have issued a media advisory, which says the media is available to talk in about 30 minutes. Isn’t it ridiculous that the media are not prepared to go to the media scrum? And I’m eating my cookie!”

This view that viral sharing makes available alternative channels carved by alternative voices directed at alternative audiences whose members may, as did rmthespian in his Duckett remixes, in turn add to the assemblage of video and voice by producing and sharing their own channels of thought and expression, this view is indebted to the framework of de Certeau, who reveals the telling distinction between strategies and tactics. De Certeau’s strategies, explains Gurney, “are those intended routes of reading (or walking, cooking, understanding, etc.) that powerful institutions have mapped for citizen consumers.” On the other hand are tactics, explained by De Certeau in this passage from *The Practice of Everyday Life*:

> I call a “tactic,”…a calculus which cannot count on a “proper” (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance…Whatever it wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into “opportunities.”

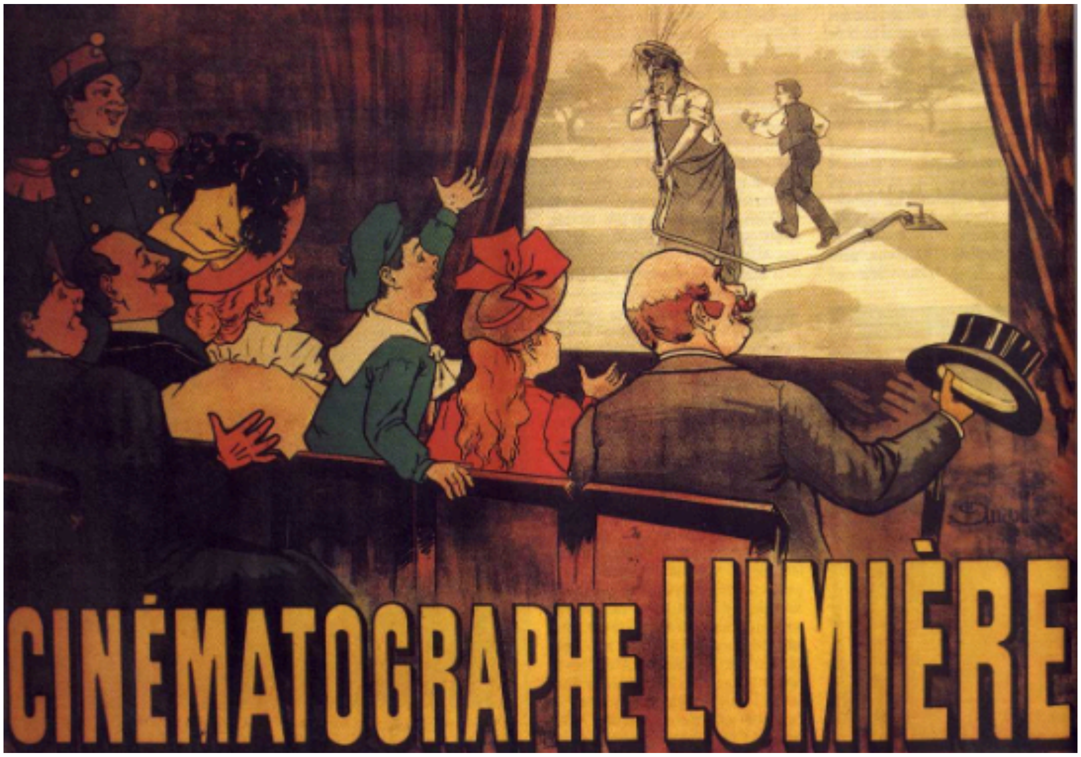
De Certeau proceeds to explain that most everyday practices, namely, “talking, reading, moving about, shopping and cooking,” are tactical in character. And so are, he says, “more generally, many ‘ways of operating’: victories of the ‘weak’ over the ‘strong’… clever tricks, knowing how to get away with things, ‘hunter’s cunning,’ maneuvers, polymorphic situations, joyful discoveries, poetic as well as warlike.” Continuing this engaging conversation with de Certeau, Gurney takes it upon himself to apply these concepts to the communications field he surveys, finding in the “myopic” institutions of corporate audiovisual culture the hallmarks of de Certeau's explication of strategy. Having just gone through a list of so-called copyright holders' legal actions against those who share or manipulate and share their images and sound, Gurney contends: "Twentieth century strategies of distribution and object purity are held as ideals above all else for nearly all facets of the culture industries despite the inherent leakiness and viral susceptibility of networked digital media platforms." Gurney then elegantly plays the metaphor game, gently inveighing against trade groups such as the Recording Industry Association of America and the Motion Picture Association of America whose time and energy and financial resources are employed in efforts to "shore up the hulls of their battleships of proprietarity but their formerly (tenuously) containable material objects of recording—vinyl platters, celluloid strips, magnetic tape, etc.—have become radically unstable and recombinant in the host environment of networked digital media."

The leakiness of the containers of both the politician's message and the bureaucrat's rules, along with, we might add, the conventional television station's posted video, is on full display in the remixed Duckett Cookie Exchange. For, there, in C is for Cookie and Goodbye, Goodbye, we are presented with the editorial prowess of mthespian in his ability to recombine Muppets and a contemporary public figure into a comic video, and we also contemplate the ease with which a seemingly self-contained speaking figure such as Stephen Duckett is cut from the context in which he moves and his heard and re-inserted into a context to which he has no connection and a setting that he has not agreed to. And we witness in those remixes how something as seemingly static in its meaning as two minutes and thirteen seconds of rolling video can be appropriated by a remix artist and mined for other meaning in the process of it, too, being shared across the social networks of producer and viewer.

And, so, we have arrived at the point in this meditation where the meaning of sharing can be drawn out and expanded from the elementary notion of what happens when one hits a share button on a social media site. What we can make out is the outline of a period in media history where the novelty is not the ease with which content can be shared, although that is dazzling in its own right, but a widening of the pool of sharers. What we are witnessing in this aspect of the Duckett Cookie Exchange is not just a sharing of content, but a sharing (and that doesn't have to imply that the sharing is accepted as legitimate by all parties) in the making of content. What has come to pass in the realm of networked digital media is what Bruns sketched as two of the key principles of what he called produsage. The neologism refers to the option now available, thanks to the affordances of digital editing and sharing, to be neither and exclusively an active producer of content or a passive recipient and user of that content. Not quite production, not quite usage, but, rather, the hybrid term produsage. Bruns lays out four principles of produsage, two of which are germane in this discussion. First: open participation, communal evaluation. "Participation in produsage," says Bruns, "must be invited from as wide a range of potential contributors as possible, and produsage environments are generally open to all comers. Produsage, in other words, is based on a principle of inclusivity, not exclusivity…" Yes, the remix artist rmthespian was not included in the troupe on the sidewalk either asking or deflecting questions in the Duckett Cookie Exchange. But that exclusion dissolves away when the territory for participation changes and he and other remix artists allow themselves in and their content out. The second principle of produsage at play in the Duckett Cookie Episode is what Bruns terms unfinished artefacts, continuing process. “Produsage does not work towards the completion of products (for distribution to end users or consumers); instead, it is engaged in an iterative, evolutionary process aimed at the gradual improvement of the community’s shared content,” says Bruns, adding that in a model of participation that is equipotential and fluid, it follows that works are continually unfinished and, potentially, infinitely occurring. Seen through a produsage lens, the finiteness of the Duckett Cookie Exchange with Edmonton media and its seeming beginning at the 0:00 mark and its seeming conclusion at the 2:13 mark is, if not an illusion, then an incompleteness, or, alternatively, as a starting point for work such as the Duckett remixes.

In *Narratology: Introduction to the theory of narrative*, Bal (1997) speaks about the supposed finiteness of text in saying, “it only means that there is a first and last word to be identified; a first and last image of a film; a frame of a painting, even if those boundaries, as we will see, are provisional and porous” (p. 5). In *Cyborg: Digital destiny and human possibility in the age of the wearable computer*, Mann (2001) also senses a porousness in the contemporary mediascape, a permeability that stems from the blossoming numbers of those able to share content. “With an ever-increasing number of media-empowered cyborgs able to act as their own videographers, news-gatherers, filmmakers and publishers, the corporate convergence will be only one version of an increasingly permeable shared reality” (p. 178). Both Bal and Mann testify to the sense that the digital tools we have at our fingers allow the past to flow into the present. They allow other media to flow in and mix and mingle with existing media. They allow other voices to share in the spree. In our age of permediability, sharing is indeed the operative word. And, yes, the premier was on to something when he opined that everyone watched and saw the Duckett video, but, with our analytical eyes on the remix artist, it’s closer to the truth to say that they watched and saw and shared and shared in the event in ways not seen before.

Fifth Meditation: The Art of rmthespian



It is recorded that between June 10 and June 12, 1895, the trailblazing filmmaker Louis Lumiere presented to a gathering of the French Photographic Society in Lyons as one of a series of short black-and-white films the 49-second *L'Arroseuer arrose*. From the fixed, single-camera viewpoint of Lumiere's new cinematographe, viewers witnessed the silent action, shot earlier that year at Lumiere's residence in Lyon, of a water hose-borne gardener watering a garden. The mundane scene proceeded and gathered plot when a mischievous boy planted a weighted foot on the hose, momentarily stemming the flow of the water and causing the elder but innocent gardener to interrogate the trickle. By staring into the hose. That was the cue for the young boy to reveal both his ploy and his command of the artist's sense of tactical timing by releasing his tread, which, of course, invited the water to resume its channeled flow through the cylindrical container and into the face of the now-enraged gardener who then chased down the boy and spanked him before resuming his watering duties.

With *L'Arroseuer arrose* (literally the sprinkler sprinkled) Cousins said Lumiere "created the first comic sequence to be recorded on film, and in so doing heralded a generation of silent slapstick movies." The poster for the movie anticipates the mirth with which audiences would greet the piece of new, moving art. In the foreground are seven audience members, the seated six of whom appear to be in the same family or acquaintance circle, along with a uniformed usher standing next to them in the aisle. They are all watching the screen on which is frozen the climax of L'Arroseuer—the shocked and wet-faced gardener holding the hose to his dripping visage—and, notably, they are all, whether male or female, young or old, parent or child, top-hatted or police-hatted, they are all laughing. There is, however, one other figure in the illustration, someone neither merry nor mad, and this figure, though smallest in perspective, is, for our purposes, the most intriguing, and that is the mischievous boy who had authored the practical joke and who is depicted running away, his head, nevertheless, turned slightly back to survey the scene that will quickly transform into a chase for him and his hide. This reel life boy, in real life an apprentice carpenter from the Lumiere factory who is variously credited as Daniel Duval and Benoit Duval, is irresistibly symbolic for those mining the richness of the Duckett Cookie Episode. For here is a member of a younger generation who wants to poke a little fun at his august elder. Here is the scene of the prescribed flow of water being interrupted by a manipulation of the channel due to that same boy's daring. Here is a display of the sense of timing so critical in the comedic enterprise. The boy in L'arroseuer arrose is the remix artist in our time: a clever, laugh-seeking practitioner who plays off the expected flow of things to rouse his or her audience, to wake them up. And who then tries to get away.

Unlike the boy of L'Arroseur arrose, rmthespian has left a written account of his work. On the YouTube page he writes: "'I'm Eating my COOKIE!' A mash up of the Cookie Monster and the monster Stephen Duckett who runs our health care system with my deepest apologies to the Cookie Monster…;)," subsequently adding, "Update: Stephen Duckett has been released of all his duties. This is good. D is for Duckett and that's not good enough for me. Duckett Duckett Duckett starts with D..uh!" On the page, rmthespian also links to the companion remix that has been the main focus of these pages, titled "Goodbye Goodbye Dr. Duckett - The cookie has crumbled!" Of the 1:20-remix posted November 25, 2010, mthespian includes this description on its YouTube page: "A sentimental goodbye to Dr. Stephen Duckett. You will be missed…;)" The viewer of L'arroseuer arrose's impish boy may be forgiven for seeing in rmthespian's winky emoticons that same sense of play and mischief that animates both the silent movie bit role player who is quickly brought to accounts and the remix artist who, some 115 years later, enjoyed arguably more success with the figure of authority he targeted.

Robert McKoen has significantly and meaningfully supplemented his own account of his remix initiatives as preserved on the YouTube pages by sharing his thoughts in a formal, recorded interview. And near the beginning of the remix artist's conception and presentation of himself and his imagination, lies incongruity. It unfolds in how McKoen takes a seemingly straightforward opening question—"Is Cookie Monster funny? Cookie Monster by himself or by itself. When you see Cookie Monster trying to put cookies into his mouth, does that make you laugh?”—and in the intriguing direction he points his answer. The short answer is yes, of course, Cookie Monster is “ridiculous” and is involved in “ridiculousness,” says the remix artist, but that’s not McKoen’s central point. For he actually answers the question with a riddle of his own: “I guess, technically, he doesn’t really even eat the cookie, right?” This is the first incongruity about the Cookie Monster, and, like incongruities of all shapes and sizes, it is memorable. McKoen reveals he heard it during Christmastime past when someone pointed out that, “you know, he doesn’t really eat, and I go, he doesn’t really eat cookies.” McKoen then points out another disconnect, of sorts, in Cookie Monster, and this one resides in the contradiction that is the very name of the Muppet. Cookie. Monster. Good. Bad. Or, in the construction McKoen makes memorable: “I mean, if you think about it, cookies are great, right? But, then, as a kid, cookies are great, but a monster isn’t. But you put the two together: Cookie Monster, right? Is that supposed to be a scary, or a great thing? I mean, for kids, you’re always afraid of the monster under your bed, but it’s a monster, but he eats cookies. Oh, then, he’s my best friend, right?” This insight into and appreciation for the divergent meanings made to inhabit terms and words in our discourse is reflective of the engine of humor. For instance, Vaid cites Kittay who says jokes are an example of what is called purposive ambiguity, going on to contend, echoing the sources we have consulted above, that “playing with multiple meanings is a critical ingredient of jokes, which typically set up an opposition between two disparate meanings.” Vaid gives the analysis a memorable turn in the stress afforded the concept of time layering that is at play when humour happens. And this conceptual formula for the funny merits a visit, because it helps to open the path to the richer understanding of the art of the remix artist. From this perspective, we see the remixer not just as a manipulator of incongruity but, in varied senses, as an artist keenly tuned to time, the times, and timing.

Vaid's analysis is anchored in the cognitively oriented accounts of information processing in humor. Drawing on Attardo and Suls, Vaid segments joke comprehension this way: "There is an initial set up phase, which lays the groundwork for the incongruity by instantiating an initial schema and a meaning consistent with that schema. In the second phase (incongruity discovery), the expectancy created by the initial schema is violated. Finally, in the third phase (resolution), the conflict created by the expectancy violation is reduced by a reinterpretation of the joke in terms of an alternate higher level schema in which the joke makes sense in light of the new information presented in the joke's punchline." What Vaid finds lacking in these various theoretical accounts of humour is an appreciation for the non-linearity of the use of and enjoyment of the joke. "Attardo notes that, aside from claiming 'that the onset of the incongruity must be sudden, or that the simultaneous consideration of the two opposed scripts must be brief,' most theories of humor 'have little to say about timing,'" says Vaid. It is not to our purpose to follow Vaid down the line of quantitative research devised to measure the concurrent activation of time periods in a knowing subject's experience of humor. It is enough to foreground Vaid's argument that there is a mysterious sense in which the two competing scripts "coexist temporally in the mind of the comprehender." This temporal coexistence is needed at the incongruity phase ("for the time necessary to the evaluation of the dissimilarity between the expected and the observed data," Attardo notes) and the temporal coexistence is also needed in in the resolution phase ("for the time necessary to the evaluation of the dissimilarity between the expected and the observed data," Attardo adds). Quoting Attardo, Vaid adds that temporal coexistence is needed in the resolution phase also because the two interpretations must be stored in working memory for a "certain period of time necessary for the research of a cognitive rule capable of solving the incongruity."

Commenting on Vaid's research, Martin says: "Punch lines are a mechanism in jokes that allow another schema to be activated. You have these two incompatible schemas activated at the same time, and you have to look at the same situation from two different points of view." This observation both reveals and conceals. It makes clear that humor plays with time, but it then cloaks that finding by turning our attention from time to space implied in "points of view." But if we stay, under Vaid's influence, with time, and return to McKoen's observation about the humor that is cookie ("cookies are great") and monster ("but a monster isn't) put together into Cookie Monster ("it's a monster but he eats cookies"), then we get a different and deeper sense of how the concept of Cookie Monster works its humour. The set up phase is the word cookie, and as McKoen testifies, it comes packed with positive and nostalgic connotations, images that spring from childhood and snacktime. Then with the word monster comes the violation. The smiles and laughter of the cookie realm are undone by the sinister aspect of monsterdom. But not undone, really. Because the utterance of "monster," occuring at a point in linear time beyond the utterance of "cookie," nevertheless remains in a temporal coexistence with "cookie." Otherwise, it would simply be a case of one word said and understood after another, in which case there would be no humor, which begins now to be understood now as a way of seeing or imagining or sensing, one eye on the present, one eye on the past, all with memory engaged. Still with Vaid as our guide to McKoen's observation, there is one more step, and that is the resolution phase. Here the positive cookie valence and the negative monster valence are stored for the time needed to solve the incongruity of the words, which, in this case, isn't as much of a solving as a questioning that undercuts our sense of the sureness of things—"Is that supposed to be scary, or a great thing? McKoen asks in the interview passage being interrogated here—and that sense has long been tied to humor at level from the slapstick banana peel gag to puns and parody. Gurney re-enters our meditation at this point: "Much of the pleasure derived from such absurd (though logical) code combinations is the result of their revealing of the oft-ignored idiosyncrasies and overlaps in our cultural codes, whether they be codes of physical composure, linguistic expression, or textual style. It was for this reason that Jacques Lacan famously loved puns and employed them in his writing and lectures. They expose the underlying slipperiness of the symbolic and ultimately our tenuous grasp on communication (if not sanity)." Gurney proceeds to show that linguistic gags (he doesn't say Cookie Monster, but we now, with McKoen and Vaid as guides, can see the term as such) participate in the basic operation of all comedic practice and that comedy "offers a space where form and content can be highlighted, contested, dismantled, and reassembled." Again, there is in Gurney this favouring of space, but we are now alert to humor's participation in time, a perspective that McKoen demonstrates is an instinct for the remix artist who, in this case, and with Tryon as in mind, sees a remix of sorts in the combining of two pre-existing media sources, in this case the words cookie and monster along with their attendant connotations and images, into a new derivative term that is Cookie Monster.

The remixer's instinct for allowing language to work out its ambiguities in time and, in the process, produce amusement, is on display at many points in the interview with McKoen, who, in those instances not only talks about what he does but does what he does, however unintentionally. Consider his witty take on the story of Justine Sacco, the former public relations executive fired after igniting a storm of protest in social media over a tweet she posted just before a flight to South Africa in December 2013. Sacco had written: "Going to Africa. Hope I don't get AIDS. Just kidding. I'm white!" Over the course of her 12-hour flight from the United States to South Africa critics cried racism and established the #HasJustineLandedYet hashtag. She apologized, but also lost her job as head of corporate communications for IAC, the media company that operates websites, including The Daily Beast, About.com, CollegeHumor and Match.com. In the interview, McKoen refers to what Boing Boing called "the tweet her round the world," as he considers the speed at which technology-enabled communication happens in our day. "It's, like, people are tweeting now and tweeting, you know, the poor woman, she wasn't even done her flight yet and someone said something how, when she comes down, when she comes off that plane, she's going to have more baggage than when she took off with, right?" McKoen's observation about the speed with which communication courses through the twitterverse is interesting and, by now, is a commonplace insight. For our purpose of gaining insight into the remix artist, though, it is more interesting to note McKoen's propensity for wordplay to make his point, in this case the word baggage. For, here, again, we see what we saw happening with the term Cookie Monster itself, which is an unfolding in time of meanings that overlap and course and mix together. And even though baggage is a single word, it contains, as McKoen uses it, a compound of meanings that we can unpack in Vaid's three stages. First, there is the set up, or the straightforward meaning of baggage, which is luggage used during travel. While that meaning is in front of us, the violation of the word occurs, as it occurs to McKoen's listeners that baggage is also being used in a colloquial sense, meaning an accumulation of negative personal history. And then there is the resolution of this ambiguity, which coincides with the listener's growing consciousness of the ambiguity, at which point the equation becomes humourous.

This pattern of a temporal coexistence of meanings recurs at other points in the interview with remix artist McKoen, most notably when, using his powers of analogy, he likens Duckett both to infamous Toronto Mayor Rob Ford (who, at the time of this writing continues to make news after admitting to crack cocaine and heavy alcohol use) and a magician. McKoen says anachronistically (as if the linear flow of time means anything to a remix artist) of Duckett: "He's being badgered by these reporters forever, and he's just, he's fed up with it and he's, he's, like, doing the Rob Ford defence, and he's pulling a Rob Ford and he's trying to, trying to, you know, it's like a magician, it's an illusion." McKoen then assumes the supposed perspective of Duckett: "Look at the cookie, look at the cookie, I'm gone, you know?" And then returns to the original voice with this assessment: "Yeah, yeah, you're gone." And then laughs. By now, the blueprint for building humor into the utterance of gone is becoming familiar. The set up occurs as the conventional definition of gone presents itself. The violation enters with the glint of awareness that its meaning is expanded from simply being away to being fired, a consciousness that is stored in the working memory for the time needed to realize the word is capable of simultaneously carrying two definitions that are put together to produce both a temporal coexistence of meaning and, in this case, an emission of laughter.

McKoen is aware that his art has much to do with putting together. At a key point in his interview, he is talking about a remix arranged and posted on YouTube by Artjail VFX, in which Toronto Mayor Rob Ford's head is digitally grafted on to the video image of actor Jean-Claude Van Damme as he is seen astride two backward-moving vehicles in a 2013 cinematic advertisement for Volvo trucks. Of the success of that remix, McKoen says: "I mean, that's, that's that's the reason it works, 'cos they were mixing two kinds of, um, the viralness of the Van Damme video that went viral, and then the whole Rob Ford situation and *then putting those two together and just making something even better out of it*" [emphasis added]. We have heard this kind of account before, most notably when Lessig defined the remix as a new creative work produced by the quoting of sound over images, or video over text, or text over sounds and the mixing of those quotes. But the lesson that is emerging from this deeper consideration of the frame of mind a remixer brings to his art—seen in the double meanings of cookie monster, baggage and gone—allows the contention that is a special kind of putting together. In other words, it is a very human putting together, based as it is on an appreciation for the complexities and affordances of human language enjoyed in and through time.

The remix artist Robert McKoen also displays this felicity for handling time in a very de Certeauean fashion. To this point in this collection of meditations, we have briefly sampled de Certeau's thought to the point of being able to distinguish between strategies and tactics. And we recall that while strategies belong to those with the power to determine the pathways of communication for citizen consumers, tactics are ways of operating that belong to the dispossessed of power and are employed successfully by those who have a feel for trickery and getting away with things; in other words, those whose victory consists more in time than in place. This is the point in his argument that de Certeau, writing in 1984, speaks to those of us in 2014 considering the meanings of a remix posted to YouTube in 2010. This is de Certeau's three-headed question: "how does time articulate itself on an organized space? How does it effect its 'breakthrough' in the occasional mode? In short, what constitutes the *implantation of memory in a place* that already forms an ensemble?" De Certeau proceeds to answer his question by sketching the instincts of the political artist, a portrait that travels without weakening to the the remix artist aspect of the Duckett Cookie Episode.

De Certeau's answer is, in part, a person. He writes: "That implantation is the moment which calls for a tightrope-walker's talent and a sense of tactics; it is the instant of art," continuing that "the occasion is taken advantage of, not created. It is furnished by the conjuncture, that is, by *external* circumstances in which a sharp eye can see the new and favourable ensemble they will constitute given *one more detail.*" McKoen's description of his art resonates with de Certeau's insight. In the interview, McKoen is asked about his position to the C is For Cookie and Goodbye, Goodbye. Did he, considering that produced not a frame of the videos he mixed together, feel that the remixes in any way were his or belonged to him. McKoen concedes it is a hard question to answer. "I mean, yeah," he says, "if you think about it, none of those pieces, none of that video, the only original thing that I did was that I put it together in a different order and I ma- I mixed it with something else and then I put [laughs] I put a font at the end and that's all," before making the understated point, "well, that's not all I did." When de

Certeau speaks of the new and favourable ensemble, we hear, translated for our time and task, rmthespian's Duckett remix videos that at this writing have attracted more than 171,000 YouTube views. And when de Certeau cites the need for "one more detail," we again find corroboration in the text of the McKoen interview. Of that first working night in Vancouver when he was coming to grips with the shape of his reaction to Stephen Duckett's Cookie Exchange with Edmonton media, McKoen describes the feeling of finding that one more detail, which he located online preserved in digital video format. At his wife's urging. "And I went, we've got nothing to do, so, I looked up and got he C is for Cookie [video] and then the next thing I know it was just falling together," he said. At two other times in the interview, McKoen testifies to de Certeau's foregrounding of the "one more detail" needed to complete the taking-shape ensemble. The first occurs as he describes discovering the Goodbye, Goodbye Little cookie soundtrack that, in his hands, became the audio bed for most of the Goodbye, Goodbye remix. "Even the song, too," he says. "Finding the song. Finding the second one. I was like, there was no way I was going to be able to find a reprise or a part two and I did, I just did a search and it took a little while but I was able…and it was perfect." That sense of finding and adding that one more detail recurs with McKoen's description of locating and editing in the Donald Trump-Stephen Baldwin clip in at the 1:09 mark of the Goodbye, Goodbye remix. Here is the exchange in which the remix artist speaks to both the quest for that one missing detail and the finding of it.

A: Had I more time, now, had I more thought to it, I think I would have trolled, um, websites and videos and try to find, you know, Kermit The Frog saying you're fired or something like that, but using Trump, at the time, 2010, I mean, he was out there in the, uh, just out there politically, as well. And he was making an ass of himself. He was a bit absurd himself with the whole Barack Obama, but it just, I think it just fit right, 'cos the whole, what was it, Celebrity Apprentice, right?

Q: Stephen Baldwin

A: Yeah, and that was the hard one to find. 'Cos I was like, Stephen. I'm like, then I found it was Stephen Baldwin and I gotta find the video and it took me a good hour, two hours to find that little clip.

Q: What was your reaction when you found it?

A: I was like, yes! It sealed the deal. 'Cos he got fired and I wanted that, that's how I wanted to end that by, you know, a public firing.

These accounts from McKoen that reworked video segments he came across "sealed the deal" or provided the feeling that "it was perfect" or "just falling together" are echoed in de Certeau's description of what the "tightrope-walker" brings to his art. "A supplementary stroke, and it will be 'right." (A supplementary keystroke, one might say in the current discussion). De Certeau/McKoen continue their dialogue: "In order for there to be a practical 'harmony' ["just falling together'] there is lacking only a little something, a scrap which becomes precious ["it was perfect," "sealed the deal"] in these particular circumstances and which the invisible treasury of the memory ["I just did a search and it took a little while but I was able…and it was perfect"] will provide."

Continuing this hopscotch back and forth through time, it is interesting to quickly note how even Gurney, who we last encountered as a guide to Rushkoff's virus metaphor, adds support to the parallels between de Certeau's thought and McKoen's words. In setting out to determine primarily how media texts spread, and what are the attendant implications for fading concepts like authorship, Gurney does not, for the most part, allow arguments for the agency of the individual media producer to stand unscrutinized. But there are countervailing winds to this direction in his thought, when, for instance he posits, in the grammar of a law, that "the social transmission of cultural texts has always depended upon the ability of an *individual,* group, and/or institution to create desirable texts and to describe the values and attributes of those texts to prospective audiences. This process often involves suggesting parallels between those texts and prior ones…" Soon after in his argument, Gurney again makes room for the the "consumer artist [who] makes a clever response or even just cultivates a snippet from something larger in a way that…exposes, repairs, or augments meaning for her/him" as a feature of the contemporary mediascape. When Gurney drills into what is clever, he finds the humourous. And his analysis is helpful and informative and deeply engaging. But clever, down to its Middle English roots, means quick to catch hold, at first in the sense of being manually skillful and then, from the early 18th century, possessing mental agility. And this quickness suggests more than simply the capacity to induce laughter; in addition, it carries the deeper suggestion that the clever one, the artist, the remix artist is adroit with time, able, recalling Peters' recalling of Benjamin, to seek out the ruptures and shortcuts and wormholes of time and bring periods and events and media into alignment with each other, and, then, recalling de Certeau, doing this by knowing what to add when, knowing how to engage fortune, which is the tactical skill of the artist looking to gain advantage on the other's ground.

Showing a Lockean capacity to quickly and creatively assemble ideas and to manufacture resemblance or congruity, de Certeau lands on this analogy when describing what is happening as the artist tactically employs time on space: "Like those birds that lay their eggs in other species' nests, memory produces in a place that does not belong to it." The flight to the generative is instructive. "More than that," de Certeau says, "memory derives its interventionary force from its very capacity to be altered —

unmoored, mobile, lacking any fixed position." Like the birds. And like digital recording. Here, Gurney adds to the picture with a pronouncement that again vibrates with the force of a law. "Once some form of recording technology – be it pen and paper or magnetically-stored binary coder – has been used to encode and transmit a cultural act or utterance, the resulting recording is then fundamentally a mobile articulation, unmoored from its human point of origin." If we accept that the meaning of the term "memory" allows both the offline and online recall from a cache of events passed, then the Internet and the portal it provides to an endless repository of texts, images, video, and sound qualifies as a meaning of memory in our digital day. The ease and the effect with which the memory bank can be summoned by the clever remix artist Robert McKoen/rmthespian, who, essentially, uses the Internet-as-memory to couple the recorded utterance of Stephen Duckett on a street in downtown Edmonton with the pop culture act that is the Muppets, and then injects into that mix certain non-contextual utterances from Duckett, then inserts the "Stephen, you're fired!" utterance from Celebrity Apprentice, and then lays in a bed of pop audio from country star Trace Adkins to produce Goodbye, Goodbye, a remix video that de Certeau might well call an instant of art. De Certeau also helps crystallize the status of these pieces of digital media when, again speaking of memory, contends that its "interventionary force" derives from its "very capacity to be altered – unmoored, mobile, lacking any fixed position." Or, as As David J. Gunkel has said memorably in his account of mashups: "Recordings are, to put it in rather blunt terms, promiscuous bastards." The remix artist uses skills to gather these promiscuous bastards together and send them into the world—in the fullness of time.

The world that he sends them into—our times—is a mediascape that is fertile ground for the work of the amateur remix artist. If not overthrown, then, at least, radically threatened is the authority of the professional storyteller. This eclipse of journalism's gatekeeper function is a common theme in the literature, both by those who generally oppose its drift and those who celebrate it. In the former camp is Pulitzer Prize winner Alex S. Jones, an American journalist and director of the Joan Shorenstein Centre on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard, who puts it this way: "One of the big ideas of the Web era is the emergence of 'citizen journalism,' which is a concept that has risen out of the power the Web creates for any individual to be part of the journalism universe." Jones proffers a sharp judgement on this infusion of amateur voices in the public realm, which he equates to the last days of journalistic objectivity. "Citizen journalism is inherently a personal medium attracting highly motivated people who have a strong perspective on what they are writing about," he states. "And I fear that this self-created content will become a staple in covering issues of politics and policy, as those same subjects are increasingly neglected by news organizations." In the latter camp is Axel Bruns, associate professor in the creative industries faculty at Queensland University of Technology. A critic of the very possibility of objectivity, Bruns turns Jones's frown upside-down, arguing that bias as the order of the day, far from being an indicator that citizens have forsaken the ability to persuade each other with facts, is the recipe for a vibrant public square—that even has a hint of remix to it. "This is not to claim that individual communities of produsers within the realm of citizen journalism will not be biased, or course – but such biases represent personal or community opinion and stand in competition to many other, differently biased, sites of citizen journalism which in combination present a rich, multiperspectival, and in-depth engagement with complex issues." Jones versus Bruns is a key debate of our times.

McKoen reveals he is very aware of the debate, and leaves no doubt which side he apologizes for. At one point in the interview he is asked why he took time out of his life to craft remix responses to "Stephen Duckett's Cookie Exchange with Edmonton media." McKoen actually builds his answer into a demarcation of the evolving mediascape, starting with what the previous template for a response (what Bruns might call the pre-produsage era) would have been. "I'm, in terms of writing a letter, 'cos that was the old way of doing it, writing a letter to the editor, right? And I'm going to complain. Um, I could have done that, but…," he said, proceeding to provide three reasons why that option was not tenable for him. The first two have to do with the background editorial structure of the newspaper, which dictates readers do not get access to unfiltered stories or accounts. McKoen appears to scoff at the very thought of taking that route, dismissing it by saying that writing a letter to the the editor "may or may not have been seen" and "probably would have been edited." Instead of words, and instead of a middleman, it would be images and sound to get his point to his audience—directly. "I could use video, I find that, I'm not a very good writer," McKoen says. "In terms of putting video together and music and using that, that's how I could basically, um, I guess, get my point across."

By McKoen's account, this is the age of getting one's point across with video, and the statistics provide some backing to that view. According to Online Video 2013, the Pew Research Center's most recent survey of the level and rate of embrace of video in the United States, the percent of American adult internet users who upload or post videos online has doubled from 14 per cent in 2009 to 31 per cent today. That includes 18 per cent of adult internet users who, according to the study, post videos they have "created or recorded themselves—many of whom hope their creations go viral." The study also found that 78 per cent of American internet users now watch or download videos, up from 69 per cent in 2009. Younger adult internet users are twice as likely to post and share videos online than older-age cohorts. More than 40 per cent of internet users aged 18-29 and 36 per cent those aged 30-49 post or share videos online, compared to 18 per cent of internet users who are 50 or older. McKoen adds his colourful personal perspective to the Pew's research findings when again in the interview he attempts to justify his decision to act unconventionally in his public response to the recorded Duckett encounter with reporters. "And, and I'm not good at pen and paper and I'm better at mashing stuff together and I think that's the new media." McKoen provides evidence for the attractiveness of the affordances of the new media by marshalling statistics not in a scientific, but a storytelling fashion. "I would say 99 out of 100 people are gonna watch that video than read the paragraph, and the paragraph could be something written by, you know, Nelson Mandela or something, something, uh, Gandhi or something just, you know, I wouldn't say earth-shattering, but, like Martin Luther King or could be something where it's so poetic and it's just, and it's just the truth, whereas they'll watch this video and they'll turn to the video instantly *and that's the age that we're in"* [italics added].

And that age of technologically enabled popular communication that we're in, McKoen demonstrates, pays little heed to apparently quaint notions of fairness or balance. We glimpsed this above in Table 1 to which we return now and from which, having viewed it not from the angle of incongruity theory, but, rather, from the Bruns-

McKoen filter, we are able to draw evidence supporting the presence in this remix artifact of what might be called the biased editor function of our times. For as much as McKoen decries the presumed interference of the fictional newspaper editor to which he did not send the hypothetical letter he did not write, he edits, radically, the two minutes and thirteen seconds of Stephen Duckett's Cookie Exchange with Edmonton media. Consider the numbers. At 1:19 in duration, Goodbye, Goodbye is 55 seconds shorter than Cookie Exchange. While Duckett is seen on screen approximately 95 per cent of the time in Cookie Exchange, that drops by almost a half to 50 per cent in the remix. The powerful image of the cookie, replete with digital pathways through time and across genre to the world of Sesame Street muppetry, is visible on the screen of the Cookie Exchange just 26 per cent of the time, compared to 62 per cent screen time for a cookie in Goodbye, Goodbye. The remix features overt textual manipulation, as is seen by 11 per cent of the scenes in Goodbye, Goodbye being presented in slow motion (versus zero per cent in the original) and 30 per cent of the remix itself being presented in slow motion (again versus zero per cent in the original). In justifying his decision not to enter the realm of the letters-to-the-editor editor with a written riposte, McKoen says his thoughts "probably would have been edited down." But this conjectural action of the imagined editor is the real stuff of the remix artist who employs editorial subtraction with gusto. In Cookie Exchange, viewers see or hear Duckett utter 91 words; in Goodbye, Goodbye, that is cut to nine, not one of which Duckett actually spoke in Cookie Exchange, his words, instead, imported from other video sources that are out of context. There is more editing out that McKoen performs, as is seen, or, as it were, not seen by Goodbye, Goodbye viewers who hear zero combined questions from news reporters and Duckett, compared to 13 questions from reporters and and three questions from Duckett captured in Cookie Exchange. McKoen the remix artist also deals in editorial addition, adding to the record of the Duckett Cookie Exchange seven additional sources of video, audio and graphics. Also added is music, which is a non-factor in Cookie Exchange, but comprises 94 per cent of the Goodbye, Goodbye timeline. And, of course, there is no added ingredient to the remix more dramatic than video of the Muppets themselves. This cursory quantitative analysis of Goodbye, Goodbye demonstrates that the editorial function may be reviled by the same remix artist who uses both the editor's scalpel and his own new remix syringe to get his point across.

The emerging point is that this editorial playfulness of the remix artist is not seen as an impediment, but, rather, as a corrective. This becomes clear at the point in the interview when McKoen is asked whether the use of editing expertise to provide to the Goodbye, Goodbye the visual illusion that Duckett is mouthing the words being sung by the Muppet band, as at the :13-:14 second mark where Duckett in slow motion is seen "saying" the word "cookie" as Cookie Monster sings it, is unfair. "I'd have to be honest and say, yeah, it was," he says, before choosing an Old Testament justice reference for his new media work. "Um, but I can't, the whole, I was going to say an eye for an eye. He was treating everyone else unfair, right? He was treating me as a taxpayer unfair…He was treating the female reporter extremely unfair, extremely sexist, it was horrible. And I just, it was kinda like just desserts. Yeah, it was a little unfair, but, um, in terms of a scale, or a morality scale, I don't think it was anywhere, it was, like on a one to ten, it was one or two being unfair, whereas he was an eight."

In this embrace of unbalance in the public political communication that is Goodbye, Goodbye, McKoen runs along the bias of our time. In the 2008 study “Make Time for Equal Time: Can the Equal Time Rule Survive a Jon Stewart Media Landscape?” Janow presents two dramatic ways in which the contemporary media landscape has shifted. “First, there is increasing public sentiment that television networks, particularly with respect to news coverage of politics, are biased in their presentation” (p. 1083), Janow says. And, then, citing a Pew 2004 study, Janow contends that “the viewing public has grown ‘increasingly cynical’ about the news media, with the majority of viewers surveyed stating that they do not trust what news organizations are saying” (p. 1083). The second wave of change in the contemporary televisual landscape is the status of entertainment. For, as the perception sinks in that balance has receded, the willingness to be entertained has gained ground. Janow says: “Television no longer fully separates its news from entertainment. Many television programs now feature a mix of entertainment and soft coverage of the news that blurs the lines between categories of television programming” (p. 1084). And then combining an account from David Bauder with his own insight, Janow says, “Whereas ‘about a decade ago…[p]oliticians went one way, and entertainers another,’ this is no longer the case. Many entertainment shows, like *The Daily Show*, now regularly feature coverage of political events” (p. 1084).

It is interesting at this point to detour from the argument only slightly and return to the McKoen interview to note how easily the hard and soft, the iron and the soft, the historical-news figures and the pop-entertainment culture personalities, mix and mingle in the remix artist’s imagination. In the course of the interview, McKoen serves up references to, in order: Cookie Monster, Oscar the Grouch, Elmo, Sesame Street, YouTube, the Australian Broadcast Company, Russell Brand, Donald Trump, Jon Stewart, George Lucas, Star Wars, Kermit the Frog, Barack Obama, Celebrity Apprentice, Stephen Baldwin, Rob Ford, Facebook, Vine, CBC, Wildrose, Ralph Klein, Phil Robertson, the Bible, Jean-Claude Van Damme, blogosphere, Up In The Air, Up, Sharon, Lois, and Bram, Little Elmo, Nolan Krause, Ed Stelmach, Alison Redford, Dick Cheney, Bugs Bunny, Hillbilly Hare, Seth Macfarlane, Family Guy, Dr. Tongue, SCTV, Nelson Mandela, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Justine Sacco. It is all there in the mind and memory of the remix artist, and it all courses together with an effect that somehow, momentarily, threatens the discreteness of each. In the presence of the remix artist one senses the blurred lines referred to by Janow; or, perhaps, more specifically one senses a kind of permeability in their borders, a kind of permediability in the mind of the remix artist that allows fantastic and thought-provoking visual pairings, such as Stephen Duckett and Cookie Monster, on the screens that reflect our strange times.

The dissatisfaction with news presentation that Janow cites as a feature of our conventional mediascape appears to resonate with McKoen, especially Janow's second point about our acceptance of the intercourse between news and entertainment. In the interview, McKoen mentions Jon Stewart—this "multi-mediated reincarnation of the classical Cynic" who "foregrounds and mocks the generic conventions of his times," according to Hart and Hartelius (2007, p. 264), who, according to Janow, has transformed that mocking of conventions into a convention of sorts—five times directly, further proof of the remix artist's tuning to the popular times. The first occasion is simple, powerful testimony to the shared cultural experience that is Jon Stewart, and, more to the visual point, Jon Stewart's face. In the course of speaking about the battle over the ridiculous that begins at the 1:01 mark of Cookie Exchange, McKoen says “I don’t think you could improve on that” and “that was pretty much as funny as it gets,” characterizing it in a kind of pop culture shorthand as “a Jon Stewart moment” before contorting his own face in the manner of Stewart’s well known, stunned expression. The second mention establishes Stewart’s position in McKoen’s pantheon of commentators. “I, basically, have his page come up on my Facebook, so, I’m seeing what he’s doing. And when there’s a, when I have, like, a two-hour break, I’ll go back and watch three weeks of episodes, stuff like that, and just cry and laugh, because, I mean, that’s, that’s the pinnacle, like, if, if, if I was to, say, I have only one goal and one goal in my life to do, it would, basically, to be able to replace Jon Stewart or be able to, ‘cos I find his show, I mean he touches more people, he reaches more people than regular news broadcasts.” The third mention happens soon after as McKoen presents a reason for his devotion to and the popularity of Stewart, and, again, this has to do with The Daily Show host’s improvement on the traditional mechanism of news delivery. Little surprise here, but it turns out that Stewart is a combiner, too. Here is McKoen about where things are today: “And, I think, we’ve gotten to the point where people, the news is just, it’s, it’s sad and depressing, there’s nothing happy about it, and there’s just so much frustration with it. Jon Stewart presents the same news, but he’s able to make us laugh. He’s able to make us sympathize, and, at the same time, I think, he’s able to motivate, motivate us get us to, to stand up, whereas, I don’t think regular news does that anymore.” The fourth mention is in the register of minor regret as McKoen recounts an unconsummated plan to send a remix to Stewart. And in the fifth mention, McKoen explores the value of Stewart’s template, which is to combine laughter and thought in the viewer. McKoen is responding to the interviewer’s assertion that he wasn’t, in constructing the Duckett-Cookie Monster remixes, simply trying to elicit laughter; that, in addition, he was aiming at getting viewers to ponder the health of the health care system. “Yeah,” McKoen concurs, “I would say base, initially, that, initially, I’m not going to put something together that doesn’t make people laugh, because, um, I guess it goes back to Jon Stewart.” McKoen then repeats his analysis of Stewart’s technique. “Everything he puts up there is intended to, to make you laugh first and think second, then, then I don’t want to say think second, but internalize secondly, or, or and then, then make you think about it and make you go, yeah, you know what? I disagree with him, or, you know what? he’s right…”

Robert McKoen, remix artist, is faithful to the Jon Stewart blueprint for political communication. For, just as Stewart masterfully inserts a serious argument or a serious question inside the pleasing coating of laughter, McKoen, too, displays a double intention in his remix work. He professes that the Duckett remixes were “just to make my family laugh” and he “just knew that everyone would get a kick out of it” while also saying that he “just wanted people to complain. Laugh at it, you know, but *at the same* [emphasis added], at the end of the day, go, you know, this is not right.” He says the whole effort was to “just, yeah, to get a laugh” but that it was also “to motivate some change, I guess,” and that he “wanted to motivate people.” We sense that the remix artist intuits his own power to marvelously combine time when he says he wanted his viewers “to be able to laugh at it and just the idea of being able to mix it with, you know, the Cookie Monster and take Duckett, but *at the same time* [emphasis added] going, go back to the original, the original video…that CTV released…and go, this is wrong, I mean, our public, you know, I don’t know what to call them, um, just a public official shouldn’t be treating people like that." Overt bias in a presentation that mixes news and entertainment are trademarks of the media of Jon Stewart, and they, in the interview of Robert McKoen, become visible elements in his operating guide of the remix artist that produces media artifacts such as Goodbye, Goodbye that, in their invitations to both deride and decide, represent the way to communicate with more and more of us these funny days.

Comedian Russell Brand also makes this timely point on the rise of the serioushumourous on the contemporary mediascape. In a memorable interview with English journalist and broadcaster Jeremy Paxman in October 2013 that has gained more than 9 million YouTube views, and to which McKoen points in his own interview, Brand defends why he counsels young people not to vote. Here is the heart of the exchange:

Brand: Why vote? We know it isn't going to make any difference. We know that already.
Paxman: It does make a difference.
Brand: I have more impact at West Ham United, cheering them on, and they lost to City, unnecessarily, sad, isn't it?
Paxman: Okay, well, now you're being facetious.
Brand: Well, facetiousness has as much value as seriousness. I think you're making a mistake, mistaking seriousness for…
Paxman: Not for, not to solve world problems by facetiousness…
Brand: We're not going to solve them with the current system. At least, facetiousness is funny.
Paxman: Some times.

Brand goes on to counter Paxman's defence of conventional political participation with a rant on voting's anemic strength.

Brand: We're at a time where communication is instantaneous. There are communities all over the world. The Occupy movement made a difference even if only in that it introduced to the popular public lexicon the idea of the one per cent versus the ninety-nine per cent. People are, people for the first time in a generation are aware of massive corporate and economic exploitation. These things are not nonsense. These subjects are not being addressed. No one's doing anything about tax havens. No one's doing anything about their political affiliations, the financial affiliations of the Conservative party, so until people start addressing things that are actually real, why wouldn't I be facetious, why would I take it seriously? Why would I encourage a constituency of young people that are absolutely indifferent to vote? Why would we, aren't you bored, aren't you more bored than anyone?

McKoen casts himself as an adherent of this school of thought, and identifies his as one of the 9,713,066 views, as of this writing, of the Brand-Paxman video encounter. "You know, there is a problem with the system, a problem with our health care, there's a problem with the way politicians, or public officials, are treating every man, you know, every person," McKoen says. "They treat us like cattle at times, and they don't listen to what we say, and the whole idea of, you know, you gotta vote to, that's how you, that's how you get your point across, well, that's, it doesn't work anymore. You know, I don't know if you saw the rant by Russell Brand…"

McKoen enters this contemporary debate over the efficacy of voting. In the interview he is directly asked why he went to the trouble, enjoyable as it was, to source and appropriate video and audio and mash them up together into a remix. Why not, instead, "just vote against the [governing Progressive Conservative party] in the next election?" Without missing a beat, he says: "I have." He then explains how a dalliance with strategic voting has left him, like Brand, convinced only that voting is not the answer. Of current Alberta Premier Alison Redford, he says, "Yeah…I voted Redford in because, it gets to the point where it's the lesser of four evils, or whatever. You don't know who to vote for anymore. And, I find that voting doesn't work." Remixing, however, does, because, as McKoen measures success, "I touch more people that way."

In "Youtubers as satirists: Humour and remix in online video," Dias da Silva and Garcia (2012) add some academic support to McKoen's observation. "As citizens seem to drift apart from forms of political participation once predominant making many fear the failure of democracy, other forms—referred to as non-conventional—appear to have been gaining visibility and relevance," they say, arguing for the acceptance of the amateur remix video, that new form of vernacular speech through the production of original and appropriated images and words, as a legitimate street of citizen participation in the image-dominant age of Internet-enabled communication. Remix artists are, according to da Silva, among the modern situationists who move in this realm of the image and who display "an all-embracing re-entry into play." Playfulness is not to be confused with child's play. Instead, "playfulness contributes to mobilisation" and to "grabbing the attention" of those exposed to it. When McKoen reveals that for him voting has lost its lustre and has been replaced by a desire to have a noticeable impact on those in his networks, he positions himself with both the non-academic Brand and the academics Dias da Silva and Garcia in their assessments of what ails the modern public square and what is being done in some online segments to rebuild a sense, at least, a personal sense, of connection to it.

To this point, we have seen the high degree to which McKoen as remix artist is attuned to his times, whether that consists in his reading of the decline of professional gatekeepers, the corresponding rise in the power of the citizen storyteller, or in his or her penchant for using video in a unapologetically biased way that is entertaining and that presents for the consideration of others with eyes and ears a relatively newfound and unconventional form of political communication, albeit one that is aimed less at being part of or effecting a majority of opinion than at, as McKoen says repeatedly in his interview, getting a point across. That sense of being keen to the times, of obeying, in a way, the times, also informs decisions of timing that McKoen makes, both the bigger "when" that concerns the time to strike and the smaller "when" that pertains to how he sustains the effect of his remix art.

McKoen asks us to consider that as memorable as he might intend his political art to be, the time period most germane to the remix artist occurs not once the work is shared, but, rather, before a single frame or audio clip is added to the editing timeline. Time, the ally on many levels of the remix artist, is also against the remix artist. This is a clear lesson from McKoen's account of the evening in Vancouver in November 2010 when he decided to forego his first night of vacation to set about on arranging a Duckett remix. In the interview, he addresses the need to not let valuable time elapse, stating the C is for Cookie remix would have been doomed if he had dug into his holiday instead of digging into the Internet. "I think we were gonna be gone for a week," he says. "Had I come back a week later, it would have been done." He agrees that, technically, nothing would have prevented him from giving birth to the remix a week after he did, but says what was shared would not have thrived with the delayed delivery. "I don't think it would have had the same effect," he says. The reason, McKoen asserts in what is a common refrain for his thoughts, has to do with "the age that we're in." He points to Vine. Vine is the Twitter-owned smartphone application that allows the user to record and embed in online social channels a series of six-second videos. To the remix artist, the six seconds are not only the time it takes to experience the video, but, also, the time it takes to produce it. "That's it, boom, you're done," he says, "even though 99.9 per cent of those Vines are not funny, there's no, no beginning, middle and end. Most of them are just really horrible and you're, like, what, you just wasted six seconds, you just wasted six seconds of my life, thank goodness it's only six seconds, but, yeah, at the time, I mean, it was a breaking story, and I knew if I didn't do it, somebody else would…" In the interview, McKoen remembers the regret he felt in not taking advantage of an earlier idea to build a remix out of the misfortune of former U.S. Vice-President Dick Cheney, who, in what has come to be known as the Dick Cheney hunting incident, reportedly accidentally shot an acquaintance while on a quail hunt in Texas in 2006. "I had a great idea and I di- and I was gonna mix it with a Bugs Bunny video, the one where he goes to the hillbillies, right, and they have that Hillbilly Hare and they have that whole song, and I wanted to remix that, and, uh, yeah, I wanted to send it to Jon Stewart," he says. "And I should have done it."

McKoen's commitment to getting the timing right extends from the decision to do the work in the first place to the decisions about how the work works. And while some observers might refer to McKoen and his remix crowd as amateurs, in the sense that they don't belong to professional or craft associations or carry accreditation or earn their keep from their work, it is important to realize that they don't accept any of the pejorative connotations of the word. McKoen makes this clear in an eddy of insight during the interview as he explains the visual standards he tries to achieve. "My background's in video, right? And, I learned pretty quickly that, especially shooting, I did event videos and weddings and stuff like that, that the less transitions you use, the better, 'cos it looks amateurish if you start using tra-, I find, that it looks, like a cross, cross dissolve or a fade-in fade-out dissolve will work, but anything else, like, a star filter and all that other kind of crap, pa-, page peel, uh, I mean, I learned early on that that was just stuff, if you wanted to, um, separate yourself from the amateur." The McKoen interview makes clear that the remix artist imposes this standard on the elements from which Goodbye,

Goodbye is formed, playfully. And like the playing of a piano or the playing of a violin, the playing of a remix video is done well for a list of reasons, prime of which is the artist's handling of time to produce a salutary effect.

McKoen understands this. His interview account of his art contains numerous references to aiming at a timing effect. Speaking here of the rhythm of the C is for Cookie remix, in which Duckett images and sound are made to fit the catchy and repetitive Sesame Street song, McKoen reveals that achieving a timing effect is one measure of success. "I mean, just base level, yeah, basically taking that situation and being able to put it, it worked so seamlessly and perfectly and flawlessly with C is for Cookie," he says. "And that's what makes me laugh, 'cos, it, it, it, it, I don't know, in terms of comedy, in terms of the beats, stuff like that, but it just hits the beats." In Goodbye, Goodbye, McKoen also refers to timing victories, most notably the segment from 0:27 to 0:31 in which Cookie Monster leads the Muppet Band in signing "Me love your colour and smell, smell," the last beat falling on slow-motion-treated video of Duckett pushing the cookie toward the nose of the CTV reporter, and then in the segment from 0:36 to 0:40 in which Cookie Monster and the barnyard players sing "But now it is time for farewell, time for farewell" as the remix audience sees Duckett look at his watch on the "time for farewell" beats. McKoen believes the time spent manipulating video and audio into the illusion of belonging together in the editor's timeline. "It was meant to fall into place like that," says McKoen. "Yeah, the idea of being able to take his lines and be able to match them with the song and have him, smell the cookie and what's the chance of that, looking at his. At one point he looks at—two and a half minutes of video and he makes her smell the cookie and looks at his watch…" McKoen's commitment to clever timing is respected even in instances where he falls short, such as the insertion at the 1:09 mark of appropriated video and audio of Donald Trump saying, “Stephen, you’re fired.” McKoen admits the *Celebrity Apprentice* clip seemingly came out of nowhere and that he would have preferred to keep to the Muppets and not bring in the business magnate. “It was just, yeah, it does, it co-, like, whoa, whoa what happened? It was just Duckett and Cookie Monster. It would have been great if Cookie Monster had said you’re fired, or whatever, that would have been brilliant…”

It is some old wisdom that McKoen is pointing toward in his new art. The ancient Greeks, we are reminded, accorded special attention to timing—the “when” of the rhetorical situation, labelling this *kairos*, that sense of identifying the mix of the right moment to speak and the right way or proportion of speaking. “As the principle of timing or opportunity, *kairos* serves both as a powerful theme within technological discourse and as an analytical concept that explains some of the suasory force by which such discourse sustains itself,” says Miller (1994, p. 82). Robert McKoen doesn’t cite the Greeks in the defence of his art, he doesn’t expand on *kairos* by name, but his sense of how to use time—our mysterious capacity to host a temporal coexistence of meanings, the artist’s de Certeauan power of using time to articulate itself on an organized space, the remix artist’s reading of the social and political times and his timing touches to keep the viewer under a spell—pervades the interview throughout which he reveals the richness of the response that met Stephen Duckett’s decision to use a cookie to communicate his unwillingness to stop and answer a few questions.

Conclusion

On June 6, 2007, in a corner of the YouTube videostreaming site where produser magnets99 shared his or her remix work, careful observers received a signal of the mixed shape of things to come in the digital mediascape. That was the day magnets99 uploaded to the platform a funny, five-second remix titled Dramatic Look, starring a generically shaped prairie dog that, for a brief instant, had exhibited a unique facial expression best described as humorously zany, madcap or evil. Certainly, a look not expected from the typically emotionless visage of the rodent. “So I made a funny video,” magnets99 wrote in a website account of the genesis of Dramatic Look. “I was bored, had 20 mins spare, and decided to take an animated gif i’d found at cuteoverload.com and put a soundtrack to it. I made it for a few friends and the users of B3ta, two weeks later, i’ve had over a million views, it’s been on tv in Poland, Italy, UK, Australia, Brazil and of course the US.” The gif from B3ta, a digital arts community message board, shows a close-up clip, itself extracted from a recording of the Japanese television show Hello! Morning, of the prairie dog. In the original broadcast, viewers saw the TV hosts marvel over the creature, which had been carried onto the set and placed into a clear-walled container by an animal handler. According to the website knowyourmeme.com, the prairie dog was introduced in episode 7 of of Hello! Morning in the segment known as Mini Moni Chicca, “in which a group of J-Pop idols presented a number of cute pet animals like bunnies, turtles among others.” In the course of the televisual flow of the interaction between hosts and guest, and at the precise instant of the prairie dog’s head turn, a studio cameraperson fortuitously zoomed in to produce the tighter shot of the animal that caught the attention of the careful viewers, sparking the process of online commentary that in turn led to the manufacturing of Dramatic Look, in which the serendipitous zoom is accentuated for humorous effect by an even tighter cropping of the animal's head. Added for theatrical effect by magnets99 was a segment of dramatic music from the score of the Mel Brooks 1974 parody, *Young Frankenstein*. In the remix, three chords—the thundering A minor, C# minor and E minor— from the John Morris film score are heard in full orchestral power as the prairie dog turns its head and stares into the camera. As of this writing, Dramatic Look has attracted 37,811,936 views, with new comments, including Match Stick's "this video is the groundworks of youtube for me loooool" and "This makes me laugh everytime that i watch it. XD" from Hinakurachan7 representative of the observations being added more than six years later. And there is no sign that Dramatic Look's power and popularity are fading. In the fall of 2013, the Minnesota Golden Gophers NCAA football team decided to use the rodent as a kind of 12th man in a home game against Wisconsin. On a giant endzone video screen at the stadium, the team displayed the prairie dog as opposing team field goal kicker Jack Russell lined up for tries of 20 and 38 yards. Russell went one for two with the prairie dog staring him down. Writing on the sbnation.com website, Rodger Sherman called the combining of the ploy to distract opposing kickers with the popular meme "a match made in heaven." On the Yahoo Sports account of Dramatic Look's gridiron debut, Graham Watson said it marked "the first time an opponent had tried a field goal facing the video board" and that "the school plans to use it from here on out."

For students of modern, digital communication, Dramatic Look and the observations and questions in the pages above help clear the path to a richer understanding of what happened in the dramatic cookie episode of Stephen Duckett. In both cases, there is an extracted clip of transmedial origin—the prairie dog's stare in the former, the cookie in the latter—that serves in each case as Barthes's punctum, piercing, respectively, magnets99 and rmthespian with an importance that transcends the original televisual flow from which it originated. In both cases, there is an incongruity. Why is a prairie dog expressing itself with a look that befits a human actor? And why is an adult human actor acting like a child? In both cases, music is added by the remix artist to strengthen the message. Digital editing effects (a tighter crop of the prairie dog as it was deterritorialized from Hello! Morning and reterritorialized in the remix, slow-motion effects added to Duckett's movement to give him a more sinister effect in the remix) are employed in both artifacts. Both, of course, harness the logic of humour and match it to the logic of the remix to attract and entertain their audiences. Both were made by private video artists for their friends. Both grew in popularity beyond their creators' dreams.

What happened to Stephen Duckett?

To begin crafting a provisional answer to the question What happened to Stephen Duckett? is to problematize those two words, Stephen Duckett. Of course, there is what might be called the real Stephen Duckett, the man who held the cookie and walked down the stairs and crossed the street and repeated that he was eating his cookie. But the recorded image of Stephen Duckett became something quite apart and, arguably, just as real for the remix artist, who used it, twisted it, elongated it, caricatured it and made it mate with images of the Cookie Monster and Donald Trump. That richer answer discovers that Stephen Duckett moved down a staircase and along a sidewalk, but he also moved, as all public figures do, in a mediascape powered by ridicule. Being recorded, Stephen Duckett became the prey of some extremely witty non-philosophers. Duckett's wife, Terri Jackson, wrote a letter to the editor of the *Edmonton Journal* on December 3, 2010, and when she used it as a way to, among other things, condemn the "dumbed down" political culture in which "U.S.-style personal vilification has replaced reasoned political discussion" and where "ill-informed scalp-hunting now passes for investigative journalism," Jackson displayed her capacity to quickly and creatively assemble ideas and to manufacture resemblance or congruity—basically what she accuses her husband's interlocutors of doing themselves. The answer to the question, what happened to Stephen Duckett? takes further shape upon consideration of the role played by the humorous incongruity—albeit supplied unwittingly by himself—that attracts an audience. And what happened to Stephen Duckett happened in an age in which those who, like the remix artists among us, want to make something happen to Stephen Duckett, can make something happen to Stephen Duckett by their ability to share their ability to use their exquisite sense of timing to make their viewers wonder what they just watched and saw, and compel them to share it widely.

There are other questions that are on the horizon, of course, questions that have to do with the enduring value of the speech employed by the remix artist. Dias da Silva and Garcia (2012) summon the argument of Hess, who cautions that online remixes may issue two illusions: "firstly, a perception that there is freedom of speech on this medium, while inducing a belief that this form of participation replaces forms of political expression such as petitioning or protests; secondly, a feeling of satisfaction for being able to speak one's mind through online video, even if there is no audience." The critique is that the remix artist's legacy is less that of a political reformer and more of a safety valve for the status quo, a way that derision can be employed by rulers to blunt opposition by making cosmetic changes. “Political satirical remix’s contribution to discussion is hence grounded on a negative stance,” say Dias da Silva and Garcia, “in which an agreement may be reached on what is undesirable, but it seldom offers alternatives and may even heighten divergence” (p. 110). This appears to be a fruitful path for more contemplation as the study of political remixes’ mechanics moves from what might be called the micro considerations in these pages to a macro view of those who may extend the work.

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Appendix: Interview With Robert McKoen

Q: Is Cookie Monster funny? Cookie Monster by himself or by itself. When you see Cookie Monster, trying to put cookies into his mouth, does that make you laugh?

A: Yeah.

Q: Why?

A: I guess, technically, he doesn't really even eat the cookie, right? He just munches it up and it comes flying out of his mouth. Obviously, he doesn't swallow it. As a kid, that was *the* show to watch when we were kids. Sesame Street, right? So, for me, Cookie Monster, Oscar the Grouch and, uh, Grover, I would say, were my top three. This was before they threw in Elmo and Elmo became the craze. But, um, it is a bit ridiculous when, you know. Nowadays, well, I'm trying to compare. As an adult now, if I was a parent, would I be concerned about this monster talking about cookies and eating cookies all the time? When I was a kid, I mean, uh, it wasn't like, um, we weren't allowed to have cookies and stuff like that, but, I don't know, it was just the ridiculousness.

Q: You make an interesting point. He's the Cookie Monster but he doesn't really…

A: Doesn't eat cookies, I know. Yeah, I heard that somewhere. I don't know how Cookie Monster came up, but, maybe they were talking about Christmas, uh, and then something about the Cookie Monster, and then someone said, you know, he doesn't really eat, and I go he doesn't really eat the cookies. He just munches them up and they go flying everywhere. But he loves to do that.

Q: He's got some life, too. He was on the Bublé Christmas special on CTV.

A: Was he?

Q: Last week, or whenever it aired. And Bublé did his imitation of the Cookie Monster. What do you think accounts for the Cookie Monster's longevity that's two generations, three generations now?

A: I think kids can identify with that. I think every just the whole genre of Sesame Street, the whole genre of Muppets, the whole genre of puppets and stuff like that, just being able to, as a kid, to identify with that, and go and recognize, you know, certain, I don't know, truths, or whatever, in it.

Q: What do you think those truths are in it?

A: Um…

Q: You said kids. You didn't say parents could identify with Cookie Monster. You said kids. So, what is it about his, its attraction to a child?

A: A child, or even an adult who is still a kid at heart, I guess, who doesn't take themselves too seriously. Cookie Monster doesn't take himself too seriously. I mean, if you think about it, cookies are great, right? But, then, as a kid, cookies are great, but a monster isn't. But you put the two together: Cookie Monster, right? Is that supposed to be scary, or a great thing? I mean, for kids, you're always afraid of the monster under your bed, but it's a monster, but he eats cookies. Oh, then, he's my best friend, right?

Q: There's something incongruous about…

A: Yeah.

Q: …Cookie Monster itself. That's what Paul Simon said about, he realized he wanted to be songwriter when he listened to the song Earth Angel. Earth…

A: [laughter]

Q: …Angel together. Um, tell me the story briefly of how you first heard—some terms, first of all. When I talk about the Duckett Cookie Episode, that's the entire…

A: Okay.

Q: …cosmos of the event, all the analysis and comment on it. The Duckett Cookie Exchange is the two minutes and thirteen seconds of video that CTV put onto YouTube.

A: Yes, okay. Was that what you did.

Q: Yeah.

A: [laughter]

Q: The, um, uh, C Is For Cookie is your remix one. Goodbye, Goodbye is your remix two. Those are my shorthand versions for it…

A: Okay.

Q: …for the four chapters. So, the story of when you first learned, heard, saw the Duckett Cookie Exchange, that two minutes and thirteen seconds. Or, maybe, it was on the news. How did you first come into contact with the Duckett Cookie Episode?

A: Um, I would say, I would say the news. Is it, how long ago was that? Is it four?

Q: December. November 2010.

A: Okay, so it was three years ago.

Q: You were in high school!

A: Oh, God, I wish. Um, I was just trying to think, because you know everything now with Facebook, you know, it pops up so fast nowadays. But back then I think it was the news. I remember watching it and just, really, like most Canadians, most Edmontonians, just, or Albertans, just, your jaw dropping and you're going, I cannot believe how rude and arrogant a man this is. He's so rude, he's so arrogant and it's just, uh, yeah, just the whole episode. It was, it was, uh, it was a farce in itself.

Q: You said rude and arrogant. Two emotions, two states of being that don't immediately connect to laughter. Did you laugh about it?

A: I was in shock. No, I was. I was just in shock. Um, you know, I guess, no. I'll back u-. Yeah, I think I did laugh at it, but, um, just laugh at the absurdness of it. And, you know, just him walking around and he's got this cookie in his hand. He's not going to answer anyone's questions, 'cos he's gotta finish his cookie, and how ridiculous is that? You know, you're not a kid. You're not a kid who's running into the corner, or, 'I'm going to eat my cookie.' No, you're a grown adult. And you're treating everyone else, um, yeah, he's become, he's kidlike. And any of his responses, that's his defensive mode. Obviously, before he left, he grabbed a cookie. He pretty much knew what he was going to do. And that was the cookie defence, right? Pretty much. And that was the barrier in all. This is my magic wand. This is my cookie. You know, you can't break through me because I have this cookie. If I concentrate on this cookie, they won't see me stumble and fail and look like a complete ass. And it was the reverse. It was the exact opposite. We got, we saw the second he came out, and I'm eating my cookie, you could see that he was a complete ass.

Q: It was interesting because the lesson we were all taught as young people in a manners lesson is don't eat while you have food in your mouth.

A: Not speak.

Q: Not speak. Sorry. Not speak while you have food in your mouth. There was that…

A: [laughter] I didn't even think about that.

Q: There was, there was that that logic to it.

A: You can't talk to me. I'm eating. I can't talk to you 'cos I'm eating. And it would be rude for me to. And I brought four extra cookies with me, so…

Q: Now, you did something other than feel a sense of rudeness or arrogance on his part. You did something more than just have it register as absurdity with you. Um, you did something. Um, you decided to make something. And you made two of those. They were two, two remixes. Um, why, why did you, why did you take time out of your life to do something in response?

A: Um, I think, because we talked about this before. Um, I'm, in terms of writing a letter, 'cos that was the old way of doing it, writing a letter to the editor, right? And I'm going to complain. Um, I could have done that, but, for me, to get my point across, to get it, to get my point across without having to use words, I could use video, I find that, I'm not a very good writer. In terms of putting video together and music and using that, that's how I could basically, um, I guess, get my point across. And just say, just, and just how frustrated I was. And just at this point, you can't treat us like this. I'm paying your salary, we're all paying your salary. You can't slough us off with this, you know, with this cookie defence and run away from us. I mean, you have some questions to answer. And instead of me writing a letter to the editor which may or not have been seen or read, um, and probably would have been edited down, I was able to take, you know, it was like an evening. It took me an evening to do the first video. And my wife and I, we were on vacation in Vancouver and we had just, it was our first day there, we had just got there…

Q: You had no other plans?

A: No, we didn't. We didn't have any plans that evening, right? And it just kinda came up and, well, let's, and she's really good at pushing me. I'm, I always have ideas but she's always gotta let's do it, and I went we've got nothing to do, so, I looked up and got the C is for Cookie and then the next thing I know it was just falling together and it was, it was just. It was my way of releasing, I guess. There was some selfishness in terms of me going, um, you know, the idea of it going viral or people even seeing it, kinda, it would be like people reading my letter. You know, people watched my video, and were able to get something from it. So, I guess in some ways, to me, I wouldn't say selfish, but, I don't know a better word for it.

Q: Maybe selfish in the good sense of the word.

A: Yeah, yeah. It was nice to get response. It was nice that people to be on the same wavelength. So, yeah, you know, I agree with you. Yeah, he was an ass, and stuff like that. And to create some discussion, as well, and.

Q: So, who did you make the remixes for?

A: Just family and friends. Immediate family and friends. You know, it's, well, I'm, there are four siblings in my family and I'm the second oldest, and, and my wife, she's, uh, a single child, so she doesn't understand. She finds it really hard to even get a word in edgewise, 'cos the four of us with my mom [unintelligible] my whole family is. It's over top of each other. We're always interrupting and stuff like that. So, in some ways it was kinda just to, kinda, I'm not gonna say put the attention back on me, just that, it was just to make my family laugh. You know, 'cos we're all left of centre in terms of our political thoughts and thinking and stuff like that, and, uh, I just knew that everyone would get a kick out of it and…

Q: How long did it take you to make it?

A: The first one?

Q: Yeah.

A: Um, if I was to clock in and clock out, um…

Q: Roughly.

A: Maybe two hours.

Q: Okay. The second one?

A: Um, the second one was a shorter, it's a shorter video. I think it's half the length. But I think it may have taken just as long. It took me a long time just to find the bits and pieces…

Q: There are more components.

A: Yes, it does.

Q: That's right. So, if you were doing this for your immediate family, why, why put it on YouTube, why put these on YouTube and make them public?

A: Um, I guess I just thought that was the easiest way of getting it out to them, and, and, I mean, it's such an open source, you know, media or website, YouTube, you know, you can just throw anything up there, right, and you just throw your friends a link, and most of the stuff that I've done it's just for immediate family and friends and if it goes elsewhere with it, that's great, but it was just just, yeah, to get a laugh.

Q: Were you surprised by the reaction…

A: Yeah.

Q: …to them?

A: Yeah. Well, the biggest surprise was seeing the ABC, the Australian Broadcast Company, use my video down, 'cos, obviously, he's Australian, right? And, so, seeing them use, there was a whole news item and use my video, it was like, hey, I'm global. [laughter]

Q: C Is For Cookie, or the Goodbye, Goodbye?

A: The C Is For Cookie one. I'm pretty sure.

Q: Did you want your viewers to be mad, angry? Did you want them to feel a sense of the ridiculousness of it, the absurdity of it? So, did you want them to take it seriously, or did you want them to take it lightly? By lightly you understand that I mean not trivially…

A: Yeah,

Q: …but for them to see the absurdity of the whole thing?

A: I'd want to say both.

Q: Okay.

A: And if they could do that, to be able to laugh at it and just the idea of being able to mix it with, you know, the Cookie Monster and take Duckett, but at the same time going, go back to the original, the original video that you guys, that CTV released, excuse me, and go, this is wrong, I mean, our public, you know, I don't know what to call them, um, just a public official shouldn't be treating people like that, shouldn't be treating reporters like that. Yeah, maybe, she was, you know, obviously he's had mics in his face all the time and he was under pressure and stuff like that, and he lost his cool, you know, and maybe I can give him that, but, but, at the same time, um, you know, you can't, you're a public official, I mean, all eyes and ears are trained on you and you screwed up, and, so, I just wanted people to complain. Laugh at it, you know, but at the same, at the end of the day, go, you know, this is not right. You know, there is a problem with the system, a problem with our health care, there's a problem with the way politicians, or public officials, are treating every man, you know, every person. They treat us like cattle at times, and they don't listen to what we say, and the whole idea of, you know, you gotta vote to, that's how you, that's how you get your word across, well, that's, it doesn't work anymore. You know, I don't know if you saw the rant by Russell Brand that he did about voting and stuff like that? And, you know what, I lean towards that. I just think that we don't have a say anymore. It feels like we don't have a say anymore.

Q: Okay, you've been pretty eloquent with a rant just now. So why not, why did you decide to, um, make it harder on yourself and mix these different components, in the case of Goodbye, Goodbye, you had a Sesame Street skit with Duckett, video from CTV, Duckett from the Calgary Herald, Duckett from somewhere else that I can't find yet…

A: Friend of Medicare.

Q: Friends of Medicare?

A: Just remind me at the end because I will go home and, I have direct links…

Q: And Trump

A: Yeah, Trump at the end.

Q: So, all of that you put together, put into there. Why not just a rant video. Why make it, why remix and not rant?

A: Why not just turn the camera on me? I think, um, just, I think people will believe me, or understand me and sympathize with me without seeing me. I don't know if that make, you know, if the camera was on me and it was just me ranting, would I get my point across more that way or would I get my point across better if I showed them the video and chopped it together and saying Goodbye, you know, you know, and still using the same movements that he did, and just the arro, and then, and be able to take the exact same movements, but turn it so that it had a different meaning to it. Like the one, where he, basically, where he, smell the cookie and he jams it in her face, where in the first video I think I did that 'cos he was just, he was, he came in and threw his cookie, you now the old kinda like that, that's what he was doing with the cookie, right? Well, for me, that's what it felt like he was doing with the cookie, and then throw it in her face and stuff like that. That's, so…

Q: There were some real examples of, um, absurd fidelity in the second, in the Goodbye, Goodbye. As the Muppets are singing it's time for us to go, you he's looking at his watch.

A: [laughter] What a great, thank you!

Q: When there's, I think, when there's a reference to smell, or…

A: Yeah, that's when he jams it in her face.

Q: And then there's other parts where his mouth is actually mouthing the same words at the Cookie Mon, as the Muppets are singing.

A: I think it was [singing] Goodbye, goodbye little Cookie, yeah. Yeah, I slowed it down.

Q: Yeah, you used a slow motion effect there to make that work.

A: I rewatched them just today.

Q: Is that?

A: That makes me laugh.

Q: Why?

A: When the pieces fall together like that, you know, like you said, like taking, I took five different videos with Trump, the Trump one was actually the hardest to find. Um, yeah, just take that and all fall into place and at the end it's just a minute and a half and then you go, I find that funny. You know, it's just like, it was meant to be. It was meant to fall into place like that. Yeah, the idea of being able to take his lines and be able to match them with the song and have him, smell the cookie and what's the chance of that, looking at his. At one point he looks at—two and a half minutes of video and he makes her smell the cookie and looks at his watch, and I'm able to use those because they work exactly with the lyrics of the song of Goodbye, Goodbye, you know…

Q: He…

A: Even the song, too. Finding the song. Finding the second one. I was like, there was no way I was going to be able to find a reprise or a part two and I did, I just did a search and it took a little while but I was able. I had never heard of that song as a kid, but I'm like, what's the chances of that? I have. And that was when, I think, my wife said, too, you have to do it, 'cos you found this song and it was perfect.

Q: Do you feel, um, do you feel that you treated Duckett in any way or his image unfairly by, uh, applying his mouth movements to words that Muppets sang, you know, in the 1970s and, uh, taking the gesture towards the watch or things like that…out of context

A: Uh…

Q: Is that unfair in any way?

A: I'd have to be honest and say, yeah, it was. Um, but, I can't, the whole, I was going to say an eye for an eye. He was treating everyone else unfair, right? He was treating me as a taxpayer unfair. He was treating the reporter. He was treating the female reporter extremely unfair, extremely sexist, it was horrible. And I just, it was kinda like just desserts. Yeah, it was like a little unfair, but, um, in terms of a scale, or a morality scale, I don't think it was anywhere, it was, like on a one to ten, it was one or two being unfair, whereas he was an eight.

Q: Now, you made another decision, in that you made a decision to, not to use part of the Cookie Exchange. And, so, if there were two minutes and thirteen seconds of Cookie Exchange, in, in neither of the remixes did you even use the majority of the…

A: Yeah

Q: …that. You didn't use anything around the debate of isn't this ridiculous, no this is ridiculous.

A: [laughter]

Q: And you didn't use anything from the stairwell going down.

A: Yeah.

Q: And you didn’t use anything toward the end, so there was a lot in there where Duckett was making his arguments that you chose not to use.

A: Hmm

Q: And, uh, I wonder why you made that decision?

A: I think I, it was just the flow of the song. Um, yeah, I mean, there was, the whole, them discussing how ridiculous the situation is, I mean, that’s a little, that’s a, I don’t think you could improve on that [laughter]. That was, that was pretty much as funny as it gets, what they were saying. It was like a Jon Stewart moment where all you have to do is show that part and just go like this [makes facial imitation of shocked Stewart] and that’s, ’cos people would get that. I didn’t need to, I didn’t need to put icing on that cake, ’cos there already was icing on that cake. Whereas, I guess my goal was, yeah, my goal was, with the first one, was just the cookie song and then you know C is for cookie, everybody knows that, my age, our age, everyone knows that song C is for Cookie. And I just thought, and it was, I think people watching the news and people, you know, involved in politics or involved in where health care is going, involved, are in their 30s and up, I think when you’re in your 20s you’re not there yet, you’re still pretty much trying to, you know, teenager, twenties you’re still trying to figure out what you’re, what you want to do—well, we’re still figuring that out, but—once you’re in your 30s and 40s, I kinda felt that I was getting, I wouldn’t say I was getting political, but just starting to think ahead and going, what kind of mark am I going to make, you know, or what kind of change can I do? And I’ve just found that through some of these videos and stuff like that, when the situation came up, it was just, C if for cookie, and, yeah, it was just all, it all worked together, I don’t know if makes any se-, it just, I knew my target audience was people my age.

Q: Okay, so you have a target audience. It’s important for you to share this. You couldn’t in all of this be, the assumption was that you were going to share it.

A: Yeah.

Q: You weren’t just going to make it for yourself.

A: No, yeah, it was just, it was more family and friends, and if it got out there, I mean, on Facebook, obviously, I link to—

Q: Okay, so why share with anybody at all? Why not just make it a diary entry that you were going to watch years from now? Why was it important to share it?

A: I wanted to motivate some change, I guess. I wanted to motivate people. You know, these get, if you could one person not on your side but one person going, yeah, you know, that was wrong, you know, and maybe, you know, and maybe, they’ll be the one who takes the flag and be the flag bearer and they’ll go further ahead, you know, and maybe someone else will take that flag and go further ahead, if that makes any sense.

Q: In Goodbye, Goodbye, uh, what's the effect of the quick cuts? You don't use other kinds of transitions. There are dissolves, there aren't, it's pretty much a quick cut…

A: Yeah.

Q: Uh, why did you decide quick cuts? Why did you go from Duckett to Cookie Monster to Duckett to Cookie Monster, Duckett to Cookie Monster, especially at the top, I think there's…

A: Yeah

Q: …ten or twelve…

A: This could be a…

Q: …little scenes there…

A: …this could be a long answer, um, well…

Q: Long answer on quick cuts, go.

A: Yeah, my background's in video, right? And, I learned pretty quickly that, especially shooting, I did event videos and weddings and stuff like that, I learned pretty quickly that, that the less transitions you use, the better, 'cos it looks amateurish if you start using tra-, I find, that it looks, like a cross, cross dissolve or a fade-in fade-out dissolve will work, but anything else, like, a star filter and all that other kind of crap, pa-, a page peel, uh, I mean, I learned early on that that was just stuff, if you wanted to, um, separate yourself from the amateur. You didn't use page peels, you used straight cuts. And if you look at almost any movie, I mean, there's, uh, I mean, Lucas, when he came out and did Star Wars, he's got some really interesting dissolves, and stuff like that, and it just worked with that fantasy genre, um, I just found out that, instead of a, it's a short video, and it's to the music, it's to the beat, um, instead of using a cross fade, you, I wanted to get to the next idea, the next thought, and, uh, and I think a cut is the quickest way, instead of, instead of using a cross fade or something like that. I don't know if I used it, yeah. I don't think I used a cross fade, at all.

Q: This might be a silly question, but, but, why did you use Cookie Monster?

A: C is for coo-, he had a cookie in his hand, and, um, I don't know that it was me or my wife or we just talked about it and we just, the whole, yeah, it just. Like, three years ago people were starting to put mashups together, and stuff like that, and it was just, the who i-, yeah, it was just. I could identify with Cookie Monster, and, it's, uh, I would say it's almost a global song. I'm sure if you were to play it, you know, at some point, everybody would join in and finish the song, because, because we know how it begins and, it's like the national anthem, I mean, it's, you know…

Q: Why did you use Donald Trump?

A: Um…

Q: First time I saw that, it came out of nowhere.

A: [laughter] It does, it does, it comes…

Q: I didn't know the he was…

A: [laughter]

Q: …in your vision in a job interview of some kind or he was being judged like that. Why did you use Trump?

A: Um, because he just got fired, or, yeah, he had just got fired. Um, I think, 'cos I was looking at it today, too, and it was just, yeah, it does, it co-, like, whoa, whoa, what happened? it was just Duckett and Cookie Monster. It would have been great if Cookie Monster had said you're fired, or whatever, that would have been brilliant, had there been a s-, you know, a

Q: Sesame Street mashup…

A: Yeah.

Q: …of

A: yeah

Q: Okay

A: Of Cookie Monster or even Kermit The Frog, you know, said, you're fired, that would have, 'cos, uh, 'cos, 'cos, I guess, in some ways I wanted to stay in the absurdity of Muppets. And for, yeah, and for both of them [unintelligible] it's all Muppets and it's all Duckett, and it's just, it's absurd, right, um, whereas, maybe now, had I more time, now, had I more thought to it, I think I would have trolled, um, websites and videos and try to find, you know, Kermit the Frog saying you're fired or something like that, but using Trump, at the time, 2010, I mean, he was out there in the, uh, just out there politically, as well. And he was making an ass of himself. He was a bit absurd himself with the whole Barack Obama, but it just, I think it just fit right, 'cos the whole, what was it, Celebrity Apprentice, right?

Q: Stephen Baldwin

A: Yeah, and that was the hard one to find. ’Cos I was like, Stephen. I’m like, then I found it was Stephen Baldwin and I gotta find the video and it took me a good hour, two hours to find that little clip.

Q: What was your reaction when you found it?

A: I was like, yes! It sealed the deal. ’Cos he got fired and I wanted that, that’s how I wanted to end that by, you know, a public firing. I didn’t want to lynch him, or whatever. I wanted to get the point across. Alberta doesn’t want you anymore. And I’m an Albertan, so, you’re fired.

Q: To me, it kinda turned Trump into a bit of a Muppet, too. I was under the spell of a Muppet.

A: Yeah

Q: And then all of a sudden.

A: He’s got Muppet hair.

Q: It had that effect on me. And then it becomes musical. Uh, you put some Trace Adkins in from a sentimental song…

A: I don’t know why. I heard that today.

Q: You’re Gonna Miss This…

A: You’re Gonna Miss This.

Q: …and the video itself…

A: Okay.

Q: …is a mother talking to a teenaged daughter who wants to grow up, quickly, and wants to get out of the small town, small schools, small life, and her, her advice to her daughter is to slow down, ’cos you’re gonna miss this. So, why, why the Trace Adkins?

A: I don’t, do you know what? ’cos I heard it again today and I was like, that’s a coun-, ’cos I don’t like country, at all, and I don’t know why. I mean,

Q: Well, you did have country at the beginning of it, it is a country…

A: Yeah,

Q: …jamboree kinda Muppets. The Muppets start country.

A: Yeah, it is a country. Yeah, you're gonna miss- maybe, the lyrics kinda say you're gonna miss this, I mean, 'cos of all your folly and all your, um, tomfoolery, or whatever, just the way you were performing, I mean, he performed horribly, and, yeah, I mean, had he done it right, yeah, you are gonna miss this, you're gonna miss the gr-, I don't know…

Q: It was to him?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: Yeah.

Q: It wasn't to the likes of media analysts or remixers that there's gonna be nothing like him to come along?

A: Hmmm.

Q: I don't know.

A: I hadn't thought of that. Until Rob Ford came.

Q: That's true. I guess it proves a user, a viewer, an experiencer of your work can see different things, as well.

A: mmhuh.

Q: You haven't tried to convince me out of any of the opinions I have shared about how I experienced it, so….Um, you mentioned Jon Stewart earlier.

A: Yeah.

Q: What, what, what kind of influence has he been, on your imagination, on your level of political [unintelligible] inspiration? What's he meant to you? Do you watch Jon Stewart? Did you watch him then?

A: Yeah, and I actually watched it more, I haven't, it's midnight, that's when the show airs, so I don't always have a chance to watch it, but I, basically, have his page come up on my Facebook, so, I'm seeing what he's doing. And when there's a, when I have, like, a two-hour break, I'll go back and watch three weeks of episodes, stuff like that, and just cry and laugh, because, I mean, that's, that's the pinnacle, like if, if, if I was to, say, I have only one goal and one goal in my life to do, it would, basically, to be able to replace Jon Stewart or be able to, 'cos I find his show, I mean he touches more people, he reaches more people than regular news broadcasts. And, I think, we've gotten to the point where people, the news is just, it's, it's sad and depressing, there's nothing happy about it, and there's just so much frustration with it. Jon Stewart presents the same news, but he's able to make us laugh. He’s able to make us sympathize, and at the same time, I think, he’s able to motivate, motivate us and get us to, to stand up, whereas, I don’t think regular news does that anymore.

Q: Um, playing off of that thought, are either, any of the remixes or their content, either Goodbye, Goodbye or C Is For Cookie, are they critical of the news? Um, of reportage these days, of reporters and what they did?

A: No, um, ah, I don’t, they, I mean, he, throughout the two videos Duckett’s, like, the antagonist, right, and, I don’t know, they were the messenger, right? You know, and you don’t shoot the messenger, and they were the one, if it wasn’t for them, he’d probably still be working. And making how m-, he still got a huge severance and still got out of here scot free and, you know, I don’t know, he got paid in cookies or something, he ma- you know to be able to leave and to be able to make so much money and to have done nothing, actually, to have gone backwards, you know, to make our health care system go backwards and, and to be able to profit from it, I just, I guess that’s what frustrates me and the media had, the media was doing their job. They were reporting. And it was, and, um, I don’t think they were any different than they were ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty years ago. Um, things have changed, maybe they’re a bit more in your face. I mean, they followed him all the way, right? I think he, his handlers could have handled it a lot better. He could have just, ’cos he wasn’t even going to the news conference. He was getting out. He was getting out of Dodge, so, um, yeah, I don’t think the media had anything to do, I think they were, uh, they were an innocent bystander and he crapped on them.

Q: How quickly, or how much do you realize time was against you? Did you have to…

A: You had to…

Q: …because you talked about being in Vancouver…

A: mmmhuh.

Q: …you took your first night of holidays to do this, you were, maybe, under the spell of it, but, but, how important was it to strike while the iron…

A: Was hot.

Q: …was hot?

A: I think we were gone, we were gonna be gone for a week. Had I come back a week later, it would have been done. Like…

Q: You, you don’t think your remix could have been put into the mix at that point?

A: Um, yeah, but I don’t think it would have had the same effect. I could have done it.

Q: Why is that?

A: Ah, I just think the age, the age that we're in. I mean, it's gotten to the point now where it's, it's, people are getting their message across, I don't know if you know what a Vine, six seconds. That's it, boom, you're done, even though 99.9 per cent of those Vines are not funny, there's no, no beginning, middle and end. Most of them are just really horrible and you're, like, what, you just wasted six seconds, you just wasted six seconds of my life, thank goodness it's only six seconds, but, yeah, at the time, I mean, it was a breaking story, and I knew if I didn't do it, somebody else would, and would they have done better? Maybe. Would they have done different? Obviously, they would have, they would have been a different…

Q: There were other remixes.

A: Yeah.

Q: Some used Schwarzenegger.

A: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Q: I'm trying to think of some of the others. Have you had occasion to think about your position to those works, to those two remixes? I mean, you took, you took nothing that you, I don't want to get the words wrong here, you didn't produce any of the video…

A: mmmheah

Q: …that you worked from. Um, you put the components together in different ways, you reached back into history…

A: mmmm

Q: …and pop culture and brought some things and put them together. Is it, is it your work? Does it belong to you? Is it yours?

A: In terms of copyright?

Q: Do you feel that it's yours?

A: That, that is hard to say because, I don't know if I told you this, but someone, you know, someone had sad, I don't know, I think it was the Cookie Monster one, it was one of the videos I had done, he says, hey, this is great, I wish I could really do that kind of stuff, and then he actually, literally, took my video and put it on his site and claimed it as his own. And that offended me. I was like, you can't do that. I mean, yeah, if you think about it, none of those pieces, none of that video, the only thing original that I did was that I put it together in a different order and I ma- I mixed it with something else and then I put [laughs] I put a font at the end and that's all, well, that's not all I did, but…

Q: Twin Dogs

A: Yeah. And, um, that arrangme- it's almost like a musical arrangement, I would say. That arrangement is mine, um, but, I don't know, I can't take credit for the original footage.

Q: Did you, did you hear from CTV or Sesame Street or NBC or any of the…

A: Nobody.

Q: …rightsholders?

A: No, no, I didn't. No, no, but I have, I've told you this before, I heard from CBC [laughs] on a different issue. I made one about the Wildrose and they came back and said I had never gotten a cease and desist letter and I thought it was kinda cool and they said take the logo off and I was like I can't use the logo and I'm like, really? I used all your, I'm fine to use their footage but I can't use their logo. And I'm like, 'cos, well, 'cos I was using their logo, but it wasn't their logo that was coming up, I basically produced, I just grabbed their logo off their site and I didn't think it would be a problem, but [laughs].

Q: It's been three years since, in this case, you put together Goodbye, Goodbye. Does it still, does it make you laugh? You said you watched it recently.

A: Yeah.

Q: Is it still funny and why, why is it funny?

A: I guess there's a couple levels there. I mean, just base level, yeah, basically taking that situation and being able to put it, it worked so seamlessly and perfectly and flawlessly with C Is For Cookie. And I, I sung along with the song and, you know, just the, I don't know, it just worked so well. And, yeah, that's what makes me laugh, 'cos it, it, it, it, I don't know, in terms of comedy, in terms of the beats, stuff like that, but it just hits the beats. I mean, when he's, he's basically telling all of Alberta fuck you with the cookie, fuck you, fuck you, right, and, you know, he's, the way he says cookie, you know, I didn't pitch it, I didn't change the pitch, but he says it, and I'm like, my God…

Q: Did you change his audio in any other ways?

A: I'm just trying to think, I don't know, I'm pretty sure I didn't pitch him at all. I think I left him the way he was. And it just w-, it was almost like he was, he knew the song, it was like he was singing along with the song in his head or something because it was, just, and it worked perfectly. I mean, it was just absurd and ridiculous and, well, it's just like watching Rob Ford, you just, I mean, when he did the drunk driving thing, I was, like, what the fuck are y- and then no one did anything. I'm like, that's like when Ralph Klein went into the homeless shelter and threw money at people. We didn't do anything. And

I'm like, if, if, I mean, I mean, two different things that girl who did that tweet about going to South Africa and getting AIDS, boom, by the time she landed she was fired, gone, nobody's complaining about that. Phil Robertson, basically, goes on this diatribe about homosexual and, yeah, almost word for word what it says in the Bible, and he gets suspended, only suspended. And people are upro- up in arms because, you know, and to see Ralph Klein and Duckett do these kinds of things and, thank God we got rid of Duckett, but no one, I mean, when Ralph Klein passed away, I mean, people said, King Ralph, and I'm like, he was an ass. I mean, my wife knew one of the, one of the media guys and they would keep driving around the block until he was sober enough to come to events. And I was, I had never heard of that, and none of that gets publicized and people are okay with that, and we shouldn't be okay with that because people, they're, I mean, Ralph Klein, Duckett representing Alberta, you don't treat us like that and at the same time, I mean, you're a public figure. I mean, there's a reason they call it a civil servant. You're supposed to be a servant, right? At one point at one time it was a volunteer job, this job, I mean, in being prime minister, uh, premier, you know, alderman or councillor. It was, you did it on a volunteer basis. Now everyone's getting paid for it and it's just like a, you know, not only are you getting paid for it, but now you're getting influenced to dis-, to change your view, you know, because it is better for business, or it's better for this or better for that, and, it's just, I don't know where I'm going with this, but, um, …

Q: Well, you sent my thoughts off in a bunch of different directions…

A: Yeah,

Q: …one of which is, is, um, why that doesn't happen?

A: Why we don't…

Q: Toronto's a city four times as big as we are, um, but Duckett-Cookie remixes happen here…

A: mmhuh

Q: not…

A: There were a couple of Rob Ford things, I think. There was the one, the one where they [laughter) took his head and put in on Van Damme when he does the splits [laughter] which I thought was funny. I mean, that's, that's, that's the reason it works 'cos they were mixing two kinds of, um, the viralness of the Van Damme video that went viral, and then the whole Rob Ford situation and then putting those two together and just making something even better out of it. That's why, uh, using the Cookie Monster, using, using, uh, Donald Trump because, he, at the point, he, at that point he was, you know, uh, not, he's still famous, but he was in the news, you know, he was in the blogosphere, or…

Q: Even though Cookie Monster when that show aired he where he did that C is for Cookie, when the show aired that had the farm band playing, they had, could have no idea that they would find their way through your imagination…

A: Yeah

Q: …into a creative work from your head, um, what, and I don't quite know where I'm going with this question, where do you, where do you find yourself when you hear, maybe, other interpretations of your work that, maybe, did not inform yours. I remember thinking when I watched it, you know what he's saying? he's saying in a way that, that that the presentation of politics on television now is so simplified that the only way to get anyone's attention is to take the childhood characters, everything is so infantalized now anyways the only way to make any kind of impact isn't by, you know, a discussion of the issues but it's to use a childhood…

A: Yeah.

Q: …product, so that wasn't a prime consideration of yours when you're making this, but you hear me say that, what's your reaction to me putting meaning onto, onto your work?

A: You know, maybe consciously I didn't think that, but, I mean, like you were saying, it does, it makes complete sense that could be presented the news the way it was, I mean, seeing that two and a half minutes, yeah, uh, that caught my attention because there was, there was some theatre to it, some absurdness to it, most news items go in one ear and out the other, but, by taking…

Q: Because why?

A: Doesn't catch our attention. Our attention, I think our attention span has gotten smaller and smaller where it's, you know, it's, that, that, that joke of what is it, Up in the Air, not Up in the Air, the joke of Up, where the dog's [dog noises], and it goes, oh, squirrel, I think that's, we've got to that point where, where the next, that's why I had to strike while the iron was hot, otherwise people would lose their attention.

Q: Doesn't your remix disprove that? You ask a lot, a lot of your viewers. You, you ask more of your viewers than, maybe, arguably the newscast.

A: Than the news item itself.

Q: What, so, you're saying that you have to get attention, but you didn't use vulgarity or nudity or, um,…

A: By using something everybody knows.

Q: …you didn't use pornography in any way…

A: Yeah. But I used the Cookie Monster. Like had it been, I'm sure there's a billion sh- like, had it been Sharon, Lois and Bram, and they sing about the cookie, or something like that, it wouldn't have hit home as much as the Cookie Monster.

Q: So, it's not the cookie, it's the Cookie Monster? There's something about the Cookie Monster itself that really resonates?

A: [unintelligible] don't want to say it's the light at the end of the tunnel, but, the whole, yeah, I, for me it resonates. And that's what I grew up on. You know, I didn't, uh, obviously, I didn't get all my morality from the Sesame Street, and stuff like that, that would be ridiculous, I'm sure, you know, right and wrong, you know, empty, full, empty, full, stuff like that, but, I mean, that, was probably some of the f-, I would have to say, that was some of the first TV I watched as a kid and I laughed, and, I wouldn't remember the episode and stuff like that, but, I've put my own kid in front and seen her watch different TV shows, I've seen other, um, my nieces and nephews and Little Elmo, and they, Elmo just laughs and everyone loves it, right? Um, I think, um, nowadays it's different. Sesame Street has changed a lot where, I think, it's become simplified, as well. I mean, there's no way the, C Is For Cookie is such a catchy song, it's, you know, it's carried on and it's still present, and stuff like that…

Q: Um, you say that there were some morality lessons there, as well.

A: In C Is For Cookie, or?

Q: In Sesame Street. And, so, what you saw in Duckett you've already said was a wrong…

A: mmmhuh

Q: …so, there's, you've talked about morality in two places, one in what you saw in Duckett and what you saw in, in, in Sesame Street, so, maybe, it's not so strange that you, you, you mined everything that there could have been from Sesame Street. I'm just thinking out loud, not a question. Um, do you have remix artists who you admire?

A: Um, not off the top of my head. There's a couple that I've, there's bit and pieces, um, I mean, when the Rob Ford thing, when that went viral with the Jean Claude van Damme thing and I thought that was funny, you know. I remember at the time, I've been so busy the last six weeks, um, part of me would have loved to have done something like that and…

Q: It's too late now?

A: Oh, yeah. Yeah, that bit, when he did that, because someone, now they make them into gifs, right? It was just like a three-second, like this, boom, like, had I had the time, I probably would have went, how can I use that, 'cos, and he didn't get called on it, and that, and maybe that's part of the reason why I did the videos, 'cos I wanted to call

Duckett on that. You know, you gotta call people on that, on, the girl losing her job, she got called on it. Right?

Q: Why not just vote against the Tories in the next election?

A: I have.

Q: Okay. [laughter]

A: I have [laughter]. I have. I've done that. I've vo-, and that's the thing. Um, up to, uh, the civic election that just happened, that was the first time I haven't voted. We were in New York, and, at the time, I live in St. Albert and I knew that, uh, I think his name is Krause, I knew he was going to get in, and I [laughter] I got lazy, but, yeah, every, uh, every provincial election I voted and I have only voted PC twice and I voted PC once to get Stelmach in, 'cos I was worried about the, the right wing, hard…

Q: Morton

A: Yeah, I was worried about him getting in and then I voted Redford in because, it gets to the point where it's the lesser of four evils, or whatever. You don't know who to vote for anymore. And, I find that voting doesn't work.

Q: But remixing does?

A: Um, I touch…

Q: This is my last question

A: …more people that way.

Q: Did it do any good, did it, did it do you any good? Did it do the world out there any good? First for you. What effect did it have on you, good or bad?

A: Um, I would say all good, um, in the sense that my sense of humour and the way I kinda packaged things together, it works. And, and, uh, I've always found myself a pretty funny person, but, it's, it's nice to get some validation.

Q: Would you have felt that you had let yourself down if you let the chance go?

A: I have let many chances go. It was, yeah, I don't know if I told you, I wanted to do a mixup when, uh, Cheney, when Cheney shot his friend. I had a great idea and I di- and I was gonna mix it with a Bugs Bunny video, the one where he goes to the hillbillies, right, and they have that Hilbilly Hare and they have that whole song, and I wanted to remix that, and, uh, yeah, I wanted to send it to Jon Stewart and I should have done it.

Q: And you didn't, and so do you feel regret?

A: Yeah, yeah, in a, in a comedic sense I feel regret for not sending it. Um, obviously, at the end of the day, it's not the end of the world that I didn't do it, but, it would have been, I don't know, that's the kind of thing you throw out there and say, okay, what kind of response am I going to get, you know?

Q: What good or bad or lack of good did it do out in the world?

A: I got some people to talk about it, I got some people to respond. I mean, it, it, uh, it takes something to get someone to watch your two minute, to let alone let them watch two minutes of your video but also get them to respond and say, hey, you know, like today I was looking at the responses for the Goodbye one, I think it was nuts and raisins, you know, or that guy was a complete idiot, and stuff like that, or when I got my first dislike, I got a dis-, I had twenty-nine dislikes on the first C is for Cookie and the first dislike someone wrote, that was Duckett who did the first one and I'm, like, okay, that's funny. And then I think about that, who disliked that, how do you dislike, I mean, what's, what's so bad about that? Why would you dislike it or are you just a troll and you want to dislike it just…

Q: Okay let's just e-, let me ask you that question to end our interview. What would, what would prevent you from, I guess if you, what would make it not funny? Or answer that, that's a good question, and I can't phrase it any better than you just phrased it, but some people didn't find it funny, um, wh-, where would you have to be in position to the characters in that drama to find it not funny, and why?

A: I think the only, well, the only, there's a, well I guess, gonna say the only way, there's not one way of making it not funny, but, I think in terms of just timing, comedic timing, if the timing was off, and the first couple of initial ones, you know there was a bit of timing here and there, so it was funny and cute, but it wasn't like out of the park or a home run, um, and then what wouldn't make it funny was if it was mean, and I don't think it was mean, you know maybe that's part of the reason why, I mean, by including the Cookie Monster, I mean, how do you make the Cookie Monster mean, right? You can't. And, then, I was, I was comparing the two, right? Compared the Cookie Monster and Duckett and I go back to saying I think what he did was mean. He was, he was not only mean to the reporter, but mean to everyone, mean to all the taxpayers, and he had been mean, he had been mean in that job the whole time, um, what I did was kinda shine a bit of a light on it in the comedic sense, but at the same time, I wouldn't say treat it with kid gloves, but kinda treat it with some irreverence and say it's a funny situation and we should laugh about it but at the same time we should do something about it. And we did, 'cos we got him fired, right?

Q: You talk about comparing and your motion was, uh, you know…

A: A scale

Q: …the scales are kinda equal, um, and so, that, that light that you shone, that light of analogy or metaphor that you shone, um, equated the two, or found similarities between the two even though they're not really the same. You've got a human being, and a creature…

A: Mmmhuh

Q: …you've got…

A: Both love cookies.

Q: But there are so many things that are…

A: The complete opposite?

Q: …the complete opposite. Human being. Muppet.

A: Yeah, I don't know. That's pretty close, human being and Muppet, he's pretty close there.

Q: Flesh and blood or polyester, or whatever…

A: A hand.

Q: A hand. So, yes…

A: Actually, if you think about it, they're both puppets. He was a puppet, as well. I mean, if, if, I mean, he was taking orders from somebody, right? And in some ways he was the fall guy, right? He, he overstepped his bounds, I'm sure his directive was, was not to talk to people. And, obviously, they didn't have a good enough PR person , 'cos [laughter], 'cos if he went rogue on his own, saying, I'll take the cookie, the [laughter] defence or the wall, the great wall of cookie, and that's what I'll use, it just blew up in his face, and, I mean, it would have been nice to have not just him lose but other people, and I mean, I don't know, I didn't follow it enough to go, okay, who else got, I don't know, was there anyone else who not get hurt, but anyone else get their hand slapped but I don't think [unintelligible].

Q: Would it have been just as funny if he had only shown the cookie once?

A: Yeh, no, it wouldn't have been. Not even close. I mean, obviously, there were times where I had to go and I went back to the same [unintelligible] where I'm showing the cookie, yeah, I didn't, actually, there's, that's another video I just thought about. Someone should do a cookie count and see how many times he said cookie, you know, did you? How many times did he say it?

Q: I don't know. I'll find it.

A: ’Cos I was like, that’s funny. How many times does he really say cookie, instead of saying I can’t comment at this time? Please, there’s going to be a meeting, I won’t be there. I have other things, you know, I have other things, but one of my staff will be talking about it.

Q: Repetition makes things funny, it seems…

A: Oh, it does.

Q: …is what you’re saying.

A: It does. In threes. That’s what they s-, I don’t know if that’s what they always say, like, if you do something in threes, it’s funny, but, then, at the same time, uh, I would have to say, uh, Seth Macfarlane and Family Guy have taken that to a new level, uh, it was always, you know, you do something in threes and, then, the third one, that’s funny, but they take it to the absurdness where it’s so far off that three, you’re, oh, my God, like, I mean…

Q: What do they do, like tens or elevens?

A: Well, it’ll go to the point where you, they’ll just go on and on about one little thing. And then it gets to that point where you’re like, either you go, you turn the channel or you start crying ’cos you’re laughing so hard, going, I can’t believe they went that far with that bit.

Q: Because you, you accentuate the repetition of it…

A: Yeah.

Q: … by your, by some effects, like, you do go to the same video a couple of times. You have Duckett moving his head back and forth. Uh…

A: Well, in the first one…

Q: …in sort of a mechanical kind of way…

A: …puppet kind of way?

Q: yeah

A: [laughter]

Q: I see where you’re goin’

A: But he did the cookie thing, I mean, the first one was to, almost like, I don't know if he was evading his eyes, but he showed the cookie as he was walking by the one reporter and then they're still asking questions and he went to shove it in her face and then as they went down I think he did it again, but then, yeah, when they're outside he was like, this is my cookie and, you know [unintelligible] and he almost finished it. I'm sure had his journey been longer, what would he have done if he didn't have any more cookie? Would he have pulled another one out of his pocket, you know? What would he have done had he ran out of his cookie and, I mean, he ran across the street and jaywalked, you know.

Q: So, what, why this repetition? Why is repetition funny? We've already seen it, if it's been repeated, I suppose.

A: Well,

Q: He's already said cookie.

A: I showed it, I showed it and then I slowed it down and then I repeated it because, well, that whole gesture, I mean, he was, I don't know if was an Italian thing where they go [gestures] F- you, it was that and then when he jams it in her face, I just slowed that down so that people caught it. I think people, and you know I'm, everyone's kinda looking, you got big screen, little screen, you're gonna see, you're gonna focus on certain things, and it was just, I, you gotta f-, I needed to, to focus on that…

Q: Even though he didn't, you made his motion arguably more sinister. Slo-motion does that.

A: Yeah, yeah. Oh, yeah, for sure. It's like Dr. Tongue's 3D House of, you know, Cookies, whatever. SCTV where it's, they went in and out to the TV, I mean, he's pretty much, you could have put a cape on him and he could have been, you know, a character out of that, as well.

Q: What happened to Duckett in those two minutes and thirteen seconds? He started as a, he started as a, as a, as the top-ranking health care civil servant in the province. Two minutes and thirteen seconds and four or five days later when the premier got up in the legislature on the day he was fired…

A: mmmhuh

Q: …the premier said everyone in the province his offensive comments. What, what happened, what happened to Duckett. He was transformed in a way, wasn't he?

A: In two and half minutes? I think, uh, you saw the real person.

Q: Oh.

A: Yeah, there was no script. He didn't have anything to hide behind. He was trying to hide behind the cookie. And then you really saw the person, and then you're going, we're really paying this guy millions of dollars and this is how he treats us?

Q: So, you're saying that all of your artifice and all of your craft was aimed at showing who he really is.

A: Yeah, 'cos of the way he acted, the way he behaved, I guess. I don't know, am I disciplining him? I don't know. Am I the parent? He just, instead of coming, instead of coming out and, and, and, and just being human, he, he he behaved worse than a kid. He behaved like a spoiled little brat. And he wasn't going to answer anyone's questions. And it was, he was evading his, yeah, and it just, you really saw who he was.

Q: But you weren't there.

A: No.

Q: Right?

A: [laughter] No, I wasn't.

Q: You weren't there, um, you didn't talk directly to the people who were there. I assume…

A: No, nobody.

Q: …I assume you didn't talk to the reporters or you haven't talked to Duckett or his PR handler…

A: No [laughter]

Q: So, how do you know, how do you know what you saw on the video…

A: Is…you know, I don't. I guess that's, it's just how I interpret it. And that's the thing. I'm, you could have a video rolling now and one, everyone's gonna look at it differently, everyone's gonna interpret it differently. And some people will be almost on the same wavelength, going, yeah, yeah, that's exactly what he's doing and people, no, no, he's trying to get away, he's being badgered by these reporters forever, and he's just, he's fed up with it and he's, he's, like, doing the Rob Ford defence, and he's pulling a Rob Ford and he's trying to, trying to, you know, it's like a magician, it's an illusion, look at the cookie, look at the cookie, I'm gone, you know? Yeah, yeah, you're gone. [laughter]. It's just, uh, yeah, I don't know, it's just, just, uh, like, ultimately, I needed to say something. And, and I'm not good at pen and paper and I'm better at mashing stuff together and I think that's the new media, is, uh, if, if you were to put down a two-minute video or even, uh, a small paragraph, I would say 99 out of a hundred people are gonna watch that video than read the paragraph, and the paragraph could be something written by, you know, Nelson Mandela or something, something, uh, Gandhi or something just, you know, I wouldn't say earth-shattering, but, like Martin Luther King or could be something where it's so poetic and it's just, and it's just the truth, whereas they'll watch this video and they'll turn to the video instantly and that's the age that we're in.

Q: It's interesting and I don't want to put words in your mouth but you haven't been saying throughout this whole interview that your only goal was to entertain and to catch attention. You've had other motives. You wanted to change…

A: Yeah.

Q: You wanted to make sure that you exercised your freedom of speech, you wanted to make sure that people paid attention to an important health care issue, so you weren't just going to get a laugh.

A: I think, I would that was…

Q: Is that fair?

A: Yeah, I would say base, initially, that, initially, I'm not going to put something together that doesn't make people laugh, because, um, I guess it goes back to Jon Stewart. Everything he throws up there, there'll be sometimes it's a bit of a groaner or it's just not as funny, but everything he puts up there is intended to, to make you laugh first and think second, then, then I don't want to say think second, but internalize secondly, or, or and then, then make you think about it and make you go, yeah, you know what? I disagree with him, or, you know what? he's right, what they did there was completely wrong. I mean, did you see this Rob Ford stuff? When Rob Ford finally came out and said he smoked, I mean, it was like, I, I watched that whole bit and I had to rewatch it 'cos I was, like, 'cos when the, yeah, well, that's the thing, with a show like that, yeah, exactly, with a show like that, I mean, they're, they're cutting edge and when Rob Ford came out, if I hadn't, I would've had to have come out, like, an hour later and mash them together and just try to beat everybody else, 'cos it's almost a race now, a lot, a lot of people are doing it, and it's, I wouldn't say it's hard to keep up, but it is, it's…

Q: Is it a lost art in any way now? You talked earlier about Vines and and, and, gifs which don't take two hours to put together…

A: No, they don't, it's, like, people are tweeting now and tweeting, you know, the poor woman, she wasn't even done her flight yet and someone said something how, when she comes down, when she comes off that plane, she's going to have more baggage than when she took off with, right?

Q: Wasn't the hashtag has Justine landed yet?

A: Yeah, something, yeah, I mean, she had six hours and they were, even Google was in on it, when they Googled her name, the first thing that came up was her flight that, her flight that she was on, and I'm, like, oh, my God, and, yeah.

Q: So, is the art, has the art been hurt by advances in technology or the same, the same narrow…

A: It's just a narrow window, I think…

Q: …window that…

A: Yeah.

Q: But is a gif as good as a mixup? Could you done a gif as effectively as a…

A: No, no. Do you see the gif where he just keeps doing it back and forth and, um, I think it elicits a response and you kinda, you kinda laugh at it, but, I mean, it could have been Duckett holding the cookie and saying, you know, cookie you, cookie you, cookie, you know, you could have done that, but it wouldn't have been as funny. It would have been a huh, you know, that's funny and then you move on, whereas, would have, you know, you get in the, you elicit response but would it, would it have achieved people commenting or writing about it or you, I mean, it got picked up in Australia. That certainly wasn't my intention. I didn't, you know, I didn't think. It was for family and friends and if, it would be kind of funny if other people saw it, you know…

Q: Here we are three, three years later, us talking about it, so it made a big impact on me, so…

A: Well, it…

Q: For the record, thank you very much…

A: No, thank you…

Q: …for putting that together and getting me and my class thinking about it and, um, and, uh, helping me finish off my research, I really appreciate that.

A: No, thank you. You know, it inspires me a bit more, kinda tells me that I need to, I need to take some time and, to, to, to keep doing this and be able to, be able to make time, you know, when a Rob Ford comes up, when someone like that comes up, to be able to go, okay, what can I do with this, instead of going, what can I, I would love to do something about it but I don't have the time, you know, it would be nice to, 'cos it…

Q: Yes, please.