

# The Humorous Times

Newsletter of the International Society for Humor Studies

Summer 2012

Ralph Mueller, Editor

Volume 25, Issue 2

## Association News



International Society for Humor Studies  
**KRAKÓW 2012 CONFERENCE**  
25-29 June 2012



### 24th ISHS Conference in Kraków

*Jagellonian University, Kraków, Poland, June 25–29, 2012*

If you attended the 24th ISHS conference in Kraków, you already know that it was a great success. 222 participants, including 45 students, from 35 countries participated.



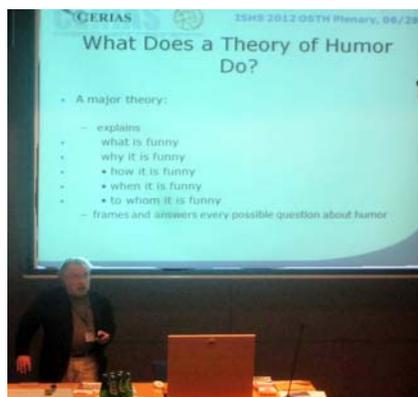
The event started with five pre-conference tutorials on Monday, June 25. Christie Davies offered a workshop on *Jokes: A comparative and social analysis*; Jessica Milner Davis presented on *Comedy and humour: How do literary genres relate to humour studies*; Giseline Kuipers taught *Humor and social boundaries: Studying humor from a social science perspective*; Victor Raskin, Christian Hempelmann, and Julia Taylor reviewed *On the Road to the Ontological Semantic Theory of Humor*, and Willibald Ruch offered *Humour and Laughter: How does psychology define, measure and study them?*



The conference schedule from June 26 through June 29 included 12 plenary presentations and 183 presentations covering topics such as comedy, health, psychology, Polish humor, media, and literature. This year, the Conference included two additional events: The Humor TAP conference in Polish and two special sessions of LAFAL2 (Linguistic Approaches to Funniness, Amusement and Laughter).

A big thank you to Wlodek Cholpicki for organizing this memorable conference!

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## Next Issue

The next *Humorous Times* is due October 2012. Please send information, contributions and announcements by September 21, 2012.

## Interviews with ISHS Conference Participants



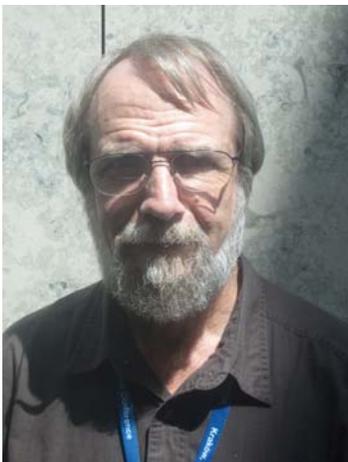
**Sharon Lockyer** (Brunel University, London): I really enjoy coming to the ISHS Conference because it is so diverse. You hear papers from a variety of perspectives: media studies, psychology, linguistics, literature, humor theory and so on. Of course, you also get to know what kind of research, key topics, and key debates are currently being discussed and what future lines of inquiry there might be. And, also, it is a real good social event. There's the academic side of things, but there's also the social side, and combining these two is important.

In terms of practical applications of humor, Alison O'Connor's paper was particularly interesting, as it examined the ways in which comedy and humor can be used to encourage people to join organizations that are politically or socially driven, and how humor can be used to sustain support. This year's conference in particular seems really successful in terms of being really international, and it is one of the largest ones I have been to recently. I think this is testament to the increasing popularity of humor studies in academia. I truly believe this is a reflection of the growing recognition of humor in academia, and an understanding that it should be in the curriculum, at local, national and international levels.

**Rebecca Higgie** (first timer, Curtin University, Western Australia): I found out about the conference by googling "humor studies", and I loved the conference; I enjoyed talking to the kinds of people here; my friends (points at her new friends), my peers, but not only peers, also people whom I have read and referenced. It was wonderful. I think I will never forget the experience of presenting in a plenary after receiving the Graduate Student Award, in a room full of people. On that day I had something like ten people coming up to me to give me feedback, advice, and references. I have a list of things to read when I go home. While I was a little terrified about presenting, the feedback and support from everyone at the conference has been fantastic – I cannot put my appreciation into words! I really commend the Society's support of graduate research and hope to be back next year.



**Larry Ventis** (2013 Conference Convener, College of William and Mary): I have come to the conference because of my long time interest in humor and differing aspects of humor research. Typically my interest has been more in applied areas such as psychotherapy and advertising, but more recently I have developed increasing interest in more conceptual topics. So it is basically the interest in research that keeps me coming back, but I thoroughly enjoy meeting the people; and after a while you have a circle of acquaintances, and you enjoy keeping in touch.



This time I have been kind of distracted during the conference as I am organizing the next one, but the structure of the conference will continue in much the same way. Of course, the physical circumstances at the College of William and Mary are a little different from Krakow, in that we have one centrally located campus that is not quite as spread out geographically as here. Also, at this point I am probably not going to schedule a bus tour that is part of conference registration, but we will have trips that are optional, and I look forward to seeing everyone next summer.

## Lifetime Achievement Award for Christie Davies



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At the end of the Conference, a big surprise awaited Christie Davies, as he received the ISHS Lifetime Achievement Award. Moira Marsh, Jessica Milner Davis, and Victor Raskin honored Christie with speeches about his long career, and Executive Secretary Martin Lampert presented him with the Award, which Christie shared later that in his home, “now takes pride of place in our main room such that the sun shines through the lettering.”

The speakers gave a heartwarming humorous presentation of Christie’s personality, his career in sociology, and his study and practice of humor. In particular, Christie has proven on many occasions that he is always available for an opposing view and an engaging debate.

Christie Davies completed his Masters degree and Ph.D. at Cambridge, and after working as a radio producer on the BBC, he became a lecturer at the University of Leeds and later a professor of sociology at the University of Reading (UK) in 1990, a position that he held until 2007. Since the first International Humor Conference in Cardiff, Wales in 1976, Christie has been dedicated to humor research, and apart from several journal articles and interviews, he has published various books on this topic, including *Ethnic Humor Around the World: A Comparative Analysis* (1990/ 1997), *Jokes and their Relation to Society* (1998), *The Mirth of the Nations* (2002), and *Jokes and Targets* (2011). In his

books, Christie has always defended the right to joke about everything that matters.

Christie served as ISHS President from 2007 to 2009, and most importantly, continues to support the Society and to make contributions to scholarly research within Humor Studies.

## Graduate Students Award (GSA) & Don and Alleen Nilsen Young Scholar Award (DANYS)

Lilian Boxman of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem received the first *Don and Alleen Nilsen Young Scholar Award* along with a \$500 stipend. Her Conference paper was entitled, *Ethnic Humor in the Digital Age: A re-evaluation*, and investigated the question of whether contemporary ethnic humor had become more globally oriented due to the digital revolution.

In addition, ISHS gave three Graduate Student Awards to Rebecca Higgie (Curtin Univ., Australia), Kim Edwards (Univ. of Western Ontario, CA), and Mahmud Farjami (Universiti Sains Malaysia).



Wladislaw Chlopicki (conference convener), Mahmud Farjami, Lilian Boxman, Rebecca Higgie, Kim Edwards, and Martin Lampert (Executive secretary)

These awards each came with a \$250 stipend. Rebecca Higgie is a doctoral candidate in the Communications & Cultural Studies Department at Curtin University, Perth, Australia. Her paper was entitled *Contemporary Kynics and Parrhesia: Exploring Satire's Claim to Truth*. Kim Edwards is doctoral candidate in the Clinical Psychology Department, University of Western Ontario, and her paper was entitled, *A Diary Based Longitudinal Study of the Relationships between Daily Humor Styles and Well-Being*. Mahmud Farjami is a doctoral student in Communications at the Universiti Sains Malaysia. He gave a presentation on *Political Satire as the Standard-bearer of Press Freedom A Review of Iranian Political Satire in the Press During the 2000s*. All student award recipients presented their work in a special morning plenary session.

## Upcoming Events



### **25th Conference of the International Society for Humor Studies** *College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia, July 2-6, 2013*

The 25th ISHS Conference will be held on the campus of the College of William and Mary in historic Williamsburg, Virginia. More information coming up in the next newsletter!

### **13th Conference of the International Society for Luso-Hispanic Humor Studies**

*Lisbon, Portugal, October 17-19, 2012*

Papers on any aspect of humor in the Spanish and Portuguese-speaking worlds are welcome, including comparative works that encompass these two languages. Papers must be jargon free and accessible to non-specialists. Presentation may be in English, Spanish or Portuguese. For further information, contact the organizer, Laura Areias at [xiiic.humor@gmail.com](mailto:xiiic.humor@gmail.com).

### **TaCo2012: The Taboo Conference**

*Forlì, Italy, October 25-27, 2012*

In a world that seems continuously to be pushing the envelope of what is acceptable to the inhabitants of specific linguistic and cultural contexts, this interdisciplinary conference acknowledges the importance of investigating taboos and their reinforcement/breaking in various areas of language, culture and society, and across different cultures. Possible topics include sex and sexuality, death and the afterlife, sickness and disability, scatology/bodily fluids, deformity/otherness, blasphemy, etc. Keynote speakers include Christie Davies (Univ. of Reading), Don Kulick (Univ. of Chicago), Brett Mills (Univ. of East Anglia), and Jessica Milner Davis (Univ. of Sidney). For more information, visit the conference website at <http://taco2012.sitlec.unibo.it/call4papers.asp>. This conference is ISHS endorsed.

### **The 19th AHSN Colloquium**

*University of Newcastle, NSW Australia, February 7-9, 2013*

The 19th Colloquium of the Australasian Humour Studies Network (AHSN) will be held at the University of Newcastle, NSW, from February 7-9, 2013, convened by Conjoint Prof. Michael Ewans FAHA and Mr. Michael Meany. The conference theme is Humour and Creativity. For the program, visit the AHSN website at <http://sydney.edu.au/humourstudies>.

### **LAFAL 3 – Entertainment Discourse Beyond Humour Studies**

*University of Łódź, Poland, March 21-23, 2013*

Humour, inherently associated with funniness, amusement, and laughter, has attracted scholarly interest for centuries. Over the past three decades, humor studies have been developing at full tilt, with innumerable publications being released each year.

The first symposium of LAFAL (Linguistic Approaches to Funniness, Amusement and Laughter), held in 2010, was focused on linguistic approaches to different types of humor. The second LAFAL symposium was held at the 2012 International Society for Humour Studies Conference in Kraków (see above). The third LAFAL symposium (2013), entitled, *Entertainment Discourse Beyond Humour Studies*, will be convened to provide a forum for linguists who are interested in concepts and language issues of relevance to humor research but who may prefer to address those without employing the well entrenched humor theories. The primary objective will be to explore multifarious phenomena which, viewed from a certain angle, appear to be humorous and, thereby, to enhance methodological tools used in humor research across a variety of linguistic disciplines.

For further information, please visit the Internet at <http://ia.uni.lodz.pl/pragmatics/lafal-3/>. Submission deadline is October 2012.

## Recent Events

### 19th Conference of the Japan Society for Humor and Laughter Studies JSHL

*Niigata, Japan, June 21-22, 2012*

*From JSHL President Hiroshi Inoue President, Translated by Goh Abe*

The 19th annual JSHL Conference was held on July 21 and 22 in Niigata in Northern Japan where, in March 2011, a tsunami hit that destroyed many towns and villages and crippled the nuclear reactors in Fukushima. The Conference was held in Niigata this year to give support to those who survived the disaster. In total, 561 individuals participated over two days.

Kaoru Hasuike, who was abducted by North Korea, gave the Conference keynote address. Mr. Hasuike lived in Niigata, and he was abducted in the same Prefecture where the conference was held.

His talk was entitled, *The Power of Humor, Laughter, and Wisdom for Surviving the Extremes*. He was held captive in North Korea for 24 years, and he talked about his strategy to survive such conditions with wisdom, humor, and laughter without knowing whether he would ever be able to return to Japan.

He compared his laughter in the context of daily life in North Korea with taking a breath in swimming: Without taking an appropriate breath during in a long swimming practice one simply cannot finish. One would drown without such a technique. For him laughter was just like that releasing the psychological stress of living in that society that gave him no will to live on.

For the conference symposium, two panelists (from Niigata and from Miyagi) talked about their experiences during the disaster living a life without laughter. Their talks were based on real experience of how to make the best use of laughter for us all. The Japan Society for Humor and Laughter Studies was pleased to be able to contribute positively to the lives of the survivors.

## Humor in the News

### New Journal on Humor: The European Journal of Humour Research (EJHR)

The European Journal of Humour Research (EJHR) is a new peer-reviewed bi-annual open access journal with an international multidisciplinary editorial board. Although geographically oriented towards the 'old continent', the European perspective aims at an international readership and contributors. EJHR covers the full range of work being done on all aspects of humor phenomena. EJHR is an interdisciplinary forum which is complementary to the leading *HUMOR* journal or the *Israeli Journal of Humour Research* (cf. *Humorous Times* 25:1, 2012). For further information please visit the Internet at <http://journals.sfu.ca/ejhr/index.php/ejhr/index>.

### Would A University Still Forbid Erasmian Satire Today?

*Peter A.G. van Bergeijk, International Institute of Social Studies  
Erasmus University, Rotterdam, the Netherlands*

*The Praise of Folly* published by Desiderius Erasmus, one of the most important and influential works of Western civilization, is a satire that deals with the authorities of Middle Age European society including the clergy, the bureaucrats and—of course—the academics. The reaction of the authorities to Erasmus' *Praise of Folly* was predictably harsh. The Universities of Cambridge, Louvain, and Oxford put it on their Index of forbidden books. But did human folly change? A unique field experiment at Erasmus University uncovers evidence on academic folly.

**Organization:** Modern European universities cannot forbid books, but do have a large hidden power to censor materials on their websites. They are excessively serious about marketing investing a lot that would be better spend on research and education. An April Fools' internet announcement provided a well defined testing ground.

**Location:** Erasmus was born in Rotterdam. The University proudly uses his name. April 1, 2012 is an appropriate cause to introduce the satire. April Fools' Day is not only a day for jokes and hoaxes but also the official "Praise of Folly Day" of the Erasmus House in Rotterdam.

**Content:** Early 2012 the hottest topic in Dutch society was leaving the euro. Interestingly, Prespo, the official press agency of Spocania in January 2012 reported on the Spocanian decision to abandon the exchange rate link between herco and euro. An official visit by minister Bulger-ÿriymme (Finance) led to an invitation to share his experiences on the research report *Poirr ef Herco!* ([www.euroseptical.blogspot.com](http://www.euroseptical.blogspot.com)). (Note that Spocania is not an April Fools' hoax, but an example of successful geofiction; see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spocanian>). The March 30 issue of the economics weekly ESB hosted the hoax and announced his lecture "Euroseptic Advice and Europolicy" for the late afternoon of Sunday April 1 at the international Institute of Social Sciences of Erasmus University. An announcement appeared on the website of this institute.

**Experiment:** A press notice sent to the PR department, basically repeated the web announcement's text with the printer's proof of the ESB article annexed. The press notice ensured that the PR department would know about the announcement of the April Fools' lecture on the website and would have to make a decision.

At 9.45 on March 29 a message was sent by the head of the PR department: "Hello Peter. We took a closer look at your messages and we are a bit surprised. Could we please consult you on the content? I am very surprised by the fact that this has already been announced on the website..."

At 14:33 on March 29 the Rector Leo de Haan send a follow-up "Hello Peter. A very good April Fool about Euroseptic Advice. I had a good laugh. My decision is that this will not be published on the ISS website."

At that time the item was deleted from the website.

**Analysis:** Academic procedures are extremely slow and time-consuming so the speed of action tells that the Rector recognized a clear and immediate threat to his institute's academic reputation. Indeed, the satire was beating the normal Erasmus University news receiving higher Google search ratings than the appointment of professors in the Social Economic Counsel and the instructions on admission to the university.

**What did we learn?** Not much in the past 500 years. In contrast with Dutch traditions and the ideas of Erasmus, the self-titled university of Rotterdam deletes harmless satire with a clear societal message from its website. It is difficult to find a more appropriate comment than the following quote of Erasmus:

For how unjust is it, if when we allow different recreations to each particular course of life, we afford no diversion to studies; especially when trifles may be a whet to more serious thoughts, and comical matters may be so treated of, as that a reader of ordinary sense may possibly thence reap more advantage than from some more big and stately argument.

Please report academic spoofs and reactions of academic communities and authorities to academic spoofs (both negative and positive) to [bergeijk@iss.nl](mailto:bergeijk@iss.nl)



***For more ISHS news, visit us on  
the web at [www.humorstudies.org](http://www.humorstudies.org).***

### New Books on Humor

Chovanec, Jan and Isabel Ermida: *Language and Humour in the Media*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholar Publishing. (978-1-4438-3894-8; USD 59.99; GBP 39.99)

*Language and Humour in the Media* provides new insights into the interface between humour studies and media discourse analysis, connecting two areas of scholarly interest that have not been studied extensively before. The volume adopts a multi-disciplinary approach, concentrating on the various roles humour plays in print and audiovisual media, the forms it takes, the purposes it serves, the butts it targets, the implications it carries and the differences it may assume across cultures.

### New Articles on Humor

Please inform us about your publications!

Bertilsdottir Rosqvist, Hanna: The Politics of Joking: Narratives of Humour and Joking among Adults with Asperger's Syndrome. In: *Disability & Society* 27:2(2012) 235-247.

Cundall, Michael: Towards a better understanding of racist and ethnic humor. In: *HUMOR* 25:2 (2012).

Daemmrlich, Ingrid G.: The self-promoting playful pen in graphic and literary rhino-caricatures. In: *HUMOR* 25:2 (2012).

Dynel, Marta: Garden paths, red lights and crossroads: On finding our way to understanding the cognitive mechanisms underlying jokes. In: *The Israeli Journal of Humor Research: An International Journal* 1:1 (2012); online: <http://www.israeli-humor-studies.org/122789/Published-Issues-1> (30.8.2012).

Guidi, Annarita: Are pun mechanisms universal? A comparative analysis across language families. In: *HUMOR* 25:3 (2012).

Harrod, Mary: Linguistic Difference as Ontological Sameness in *Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis* (2008). In: *Studies in French Cinema* 12:1 (2012), 75-86.

Ludden, Geke D. S. / Kudrowitz, Barry M. / Schifferstein, Hendrik N. J. / Hekkert, Paul: Surprise and humor in product design. In: *HUMOR* 25:3 (2012).

Meyer, Matthew: The Comic Nature of *Ecce Homo*. In: *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 43:1 (2012), 32-43.

Nissan, Ephraim: 2011: The Sesquicentennial of the Birth of America's Top Hebrew Humorist The sweat of the (low) brow: New York Immigrant life in Gerson Rosenzweig's satire. Facets of his Talmudic parody Tractate America. In: *The Israeli Journal of Humor Research: An International Journal* 1:1 (2012); online: <http://www.israeli-humor-studies.org/122789/Published-Issues-1> (30.8.2012)

Nissan, Ephraim: A tentative evaluation of the spread of humor studies among journals in other domains. In: *The Israeli Journal of Humor Research: An International Journal* 1:1 (2012); online: <http://www.israeli-humor-studies.org/122789/Published-Issues-1> (30.8.2012)

Perks, Lisa Glebatis: The ancient roots of humor theory. In: *HUMOR* 25:2 (2012).

Platt, Tracey/Willibald Ruch/Jennifer Hofmann/René T. Proyer: Extreme fear of being laughed at: components of gelotophobia. In: *The Israeli Journal of Humor Research: An International Journal* 1:1 (2012); online: <http://www.israeli-humor-studies.org/122789/Published-Issues-1> (30.8.2012)

Shouse, Eric/Bernard Timberg: A festus for the restivus: Jewish-American comedians respond to Christmas as the national American holiday. In: *HUMOR* 25:2 (2012).

Stewart, Patrick: Laughter on the 2008 campaign trail: How presidential candidates used humor during primary debates In: *HUMOR* 25:3 (2012).

Strzelczyk, Florentine: 'Looking for an Old Man with a Black Moustache': Hitler, Humour, Fake, and Forgery in *Schtonk!* In: Gabriele Mueller, James M. Skidmore, (eds.): *Cinema and Social Change in Germany and Austria*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 2012.

Sutton-Spence, Rachel / Napoli, Donna Jo: Deaf jokes and sign language humor. In: *HUMOR* 25:3 (2012).

Woodward-Smith, Elizabeth: Variability in Content and Form: From Informative to Humorous Advertising Texts. In: Ewa Piechurska-Kuciel; Liliana Piasecka (eds.): *Variability and Stability in Foreign and Second Language Learning Contexts*. Newcastle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars, 2012. Vol. 1, 109-129.

Yoong, David: The case of humor in the Malaysian House of Representatives. In: *HUMOR* 25:3 (2012).

Young, Dannagal Goldthwaite: A flip-flopper and a dumb guy walk into a bar: Political humor and priming in the 2004 campaign. In: *HUMOR* 25:3 (2012).