

The Humorous Times

Newsletter of the International Society for Humor Studies

Summer 2017

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Association News



29th International Society for Humor Studies Conference

University of Quebec at Montreal
July 10 to 14, 2017

From Christelle Paré
2017 ISHS Conference Coordinator

The *Université du Québec à Montréal*, in collaboration with the *Observatoire de l'humour*, hosted the 2017 International Society for Humor Studies Conference from July 10 to July 14, 2017 in *La belle province* of Quebec, more precisely in downtown Montréal. This year's conference welcomed 229 participants from 27 countries. Papers and workshops were organized into five thematic areas: Philosophy and Theories (Monday), Political Dimensions (Tuesday), Health and Clowning (Wednesday), Comedy Industries/Humor and Social Issues (Thursday), and Stand-up Comedy (Friday). Each day started with plenary sessions on the theme of the day. Featured plenary speakers included:

- Sharon Lockyer,
Epistemology and Legitimacy
- Delia Chiaro, Debra Aarons, Chiara Bucaria, and Anthony Mitzel, *Laughing at Politicians Transnationally*
- Sue Morrison, Sue Proctor, Yves Sheriff, and Denise Margonari, *Importance of the Clown in Humor Studies*
- Ian Brodie, Bruce Hills and Christelle Paré
Stand-Up Comedy as an Art Form and a Business
- Steven Kapica, Sheila Lintott, Eric Shouse, and Patrice Oppliger, *The Dark Side of Stand-up Comedy: Ruminations on Death, Alienation and Violence*

This year's Graduate Student Awards winners were recognized in a special plenary session on Thursday July 13. This year's GSA recipients included Anthony Mitzel, Shuming Bai, and 2017 DANYS Award winner, Cao Ying.

On Tuesday evening, July 11, Anne-Marie Deschamps hosted the Conference's stand-up comedy competition. A jury panel chose winners in two categories—one for first-timer performers and one for experienced comics. Winners were Sandy El-Bitar and Christopher Molineux. On Thursday July 13, the Annual ISHS Membership meeting took place in the afternoon and the Conference banquet took place in the evening. The 29th ISHS Conference concluded on with final sessions held on the afternoon of Friday July 14.

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Next Issue

The next *The Humorous Times* is due November 2017.

30th International Society for Humor Studies Conference

University of Tallinn, Estonia, June 25-29, 2018

The 30th ISHS Conference will take place in Tallinn, Estonia from June 25 to June 29. The theme of the 2018 Conference will be *Humour: Positively (?) Transforming*, focusing on the creative and contextual aspects of humor. Registration and the Call for Papers for the 2018 ISHS Conference is set to begin in November. In advance of the opening of registration, the Tallinn organizers are making a special call from October 1 to November 1 for panels. You can submit proposals for moderated conference panels, symposia, and roundtables of 90 minutes or 180 minutes in length. Panel proposals should include an abstract of 250 to 300 words along with a preliminary list of contributors and their e-mails. Proposals should also indicate whether the panel would be open to additional contributors who could submit panel papers following the opening of Conference registration. All panel proposals should be sent to ishsconference2018@gmail.com by November 1. The official call for general papers will follow shortly thereafter and run through March 31. If you have additional questions about the 2018 Conference, please contact the Conference Organizers at ishsconference2018@gmail.com or visit the Conference website at <https://www.folklore.ee/ishs2018/>.

2019 Conference Proposals

The International Society for Humor Studies is still accepting proposals to host the 2019 ISHS Conference in North America. If you are a humor scholar in North America and would like to host the 2019 ISHS Conference at your college or university, contact the ISHS Executive Secretary, Martin Lampert, at ishs@hnu.edu for more details on how to craft and submit a proposal to host an ISHS Conference.

Upcoming Events

Eighteenth Annual Conference of The International Society for Luso-Hispanic Humor Studies

Universidad de Santiago, Chile, October 24-26, 2017

The International Society for Luso-Hispanic Humor Studies will hold its 18th Annual Conference on the campus of the University of Santiago in Chile. For more Conference and Society information, visit the ISLHHS page on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/ISLHHS/> or the Conference organizers at humor.luso.hispanico@gmail.com.

Twenty-Fourth AHSN Colloquium

Central Queensland University, Cairns Campus, Australia, February 2-4, 2018

The 24th Colloquium of the Australasian Humour Studies Network (AHSN) will be held from February 2 to 4, 2018 at the Central Queensland University, Cairns Campus, Australia. The conveners are Anja Pabel, Jessica Milner Davis, and Bruce Findlay. The conference theme will be *Humour: How does it Travel*. For more information, contact Anja Pabel at a.pabel@cqu.edu.au or visit the AHSN website at <http://www.sydney.edu.au/humourstudies>.

Forty-Fourth Annual Meeting of The Association for the Study of Play

Melbourne, Florida, USA, February 28-March 3, 2018

The 44th Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Play will be held from February 28 to March 3, 2018 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel on the Melbourne Waterfront in Melbourne, Florida. The 2018 TASP Conference's theme will be *Fulfilling the Promise of Play*, and the keynote speaker will be Dr. Peter Grey, author of *Free to Learn: Why Unleashing the instinct to Play will Make our Children Happier, More Self-Reliant, and Better Students for Life*. For more information, contact Walter Drew at drwalterdrew@gmail.com or visit the or visit the TASP website at www.tasplay.org/about-us/conference.

Thirty-First Meeting of the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor

San Diego, California, USA, April 12-15, 2018

The 31st Conference of the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor will be held April 12 to 15, 2018 at the Holiday Inn-Bayside, San Diego, USA. The theme of the 31st AATH Conference will be *Resilience: Harnessing the Power of Humor*. For more information, visit the AATH Conference page at <http://www.aath.org>.

Eighteenth International Summer School and Symposium on Humour and Laughter

University of Wolverhampton, Telford, United Kingdom, July 2-7, 2018

The 18th International Summer School and Symposium on Humour and Laughter will be held at the University of Wolverhampton, Telford, United Kingdom from July 2 to July 7, 2018. Josie Boutonnet and Tracey Platt are the local organizers. For information, visit the summer school website at <http://humoursummerschool.org/18/>.

Book Reviews

Psychological investigations of Humor and Laughter: Honoring the Research Contributions of Professor Rod Martin

Reviewed by W. Larry Ventis, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia, USA

Nicholas A. Kuiper, Ed. (2016). Psychological investigations of humor and laughter: Honoring the research contributions of Professor Rod Martin, Special Issue. *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, 12(3), 312-512. Available at: <http://ejop.psychopen.eu/issue/view/64>.

Published as a special issue of the open-access publication *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, this extensive collection of research and theoretical articles on various aspects of humor honors Dr. Rod Martin on the occasion of his retirement from the position of Professor of Psychology at the University of Western Ontario. Erik Erikson, in his eight developmental stages, identifies the salient developmental task in adulthood as generativity. The extensive scope of this present set of articles, building on the work of Dr. Martin, serves as ample confirmation of the highly admirable level of generativity that he has accomplished over the course of his impressive career.

An excellent overview of prominent aspects of Martin's humor research is provided by the last item in the Festschrift, which is an interview with Dr. Martin by his colleague and frequent collaborator Nicholas Kuiper. The interview presents both the range of his humor research interests and some sequential evolution of the topics he has studied. His initial focus veered towards individual differences in aspects of humor, and Martin's collaboration with his mentor Herbert Lefcourt produced several early measures of humor. The Situational Humor Response Questionnaire and the Coping Humor Scale are prominent examples which have been widely used in subsequent research.

Later in his career Martin's identification of both adaptive and maladaptive aspects of humor, as embodied in his four humor styles, marked a highly significant advance in humor research, eclipsing the earlier pervasive tendency to simply assume that humor was predominantly positive. Furthermore, the development of the Humor Styles Questionnaire (Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003), has been instrumental in generating a body of literature on both the correlates and consequences of the differing styles of humor, a point reflected in the range of research in this very Festschrift, where investigations using the Humor Styles Questionnaire and the Coping Humor Scale are amply represented. The study by Fox, Hunter, & Jones, "Longitudinal Associations Between Humor Styles and Adjustment in Adolescence", provides evidence using a longitudinal design – a relatively infrequent methodology in humor research – that a deployment of Self Defeating Humor can foster depression, and that the emergence of depression can also be associated with an increase in such humor in adolescents.

Although humor styles were initially assumed to be traits that are relatively stable within an individual, the study by DiDonato & Jakubiak, "Strategically Funny: Romantic Motives Affect Humor

Styles in Relationship Initiation”, suggests that, depending on one’s motives, humor styles may at least in some instances be used strategically. Their findings imply that some people may be more likely to use negative humor if anticipating a short-term relationship, but positive humor if intending a long-term relationship.

As one reflection of the influence of the Humor Styles Questionnaire on humor research, the scale has been translated into multiple languages. The Ruch and Heintz article in the present collection, “The German Version of the Humor Styles Questionnaire: Psychometric Properties and Overlap with Other Styles of Humor”, translated and adapted the Scale for German speaking participants. In the process they identified eight styles of humorous conduct, though the various similarities and overlaps still allowed Martin’s four styles to emerge as valid independent constructs.

The article by Berger, listing 45 techniques of humor, is not literally derived from Martin’s work; however, in identifying some of the potentially complex ingredients of humor, it seems to this reviewer to be related to a recent and ongoing focus of the honoree, seen as an attempt to clarify the essential aspects of incongruity. Since incongruity resolution theory is currently dominant among humor analysts, this approach might eventually constitute a valuable advance toward a more complete understanding of their subject.

Sven Svebak’s “Consequences of Laughter upon Trunk Compression and Cortical Activation: Linear and Polynomial Relations” is the sole article focused on laughter, a term constituent within the volume’s title. Although there has been proportionally more research on understanding the cognitive stimulus of humor, Svebak’s approach demonstrates specific physiological consequences of the behavioral response of laughter, and this study, along with much of his published scholarship, shows potential implications for humor and laughter for health consequences, a focus that has been of considerable interest for researchers.

In conclusion, and to return to the developmental theory of Erik Erikson, the last of his eight stages of human development constitutes the emergence of a sense of Integrity versus Despair in which one reflects on the course of one’s life and evaluates the results. Recalling that, in Erikson, positive resolution of each developmental conflict depends on how constructively one has resolved earlier developmental issues, one may clearly conclude, given both the quality and quantity of research exemplified in Martin’s work plus his profound influence on that of others, witness the present Festschrift, that few scholars have in their life’s work achieved a deeper and more lasting sense of integrity.

The Ambivalent Internet: Mischief, Oddity, and Antagonism Online

Reviewed by John Parkin, University of Bristol, United Kingdom

Whitney Phillips and Ryan M. Miller (2017). *The Ambivalent Internet: Mischief, Oddity, and Antagonism Online*. Cambridge: Polity. 246 pp. ISBN 978-1-5095-0126-7.

Concerned to discuss and analyse the use of irreverence, provocation, black humor and spoofing by cybernauts, the Whitney Phillips and Ryan Miller note, laudably enough, that the variety of reactions to these activities (including, for instance, websites set up in praise of mass murderers like Anders Breivik) is “endless, and often inscrutable” (p. 10), something equally true of more mainstream comedy. No less varied are the purposes intended by their creators, who could be mere assholes or else sincerely motivated satirists, hence the central notion of ambivalence incorporated into the book’s title, and into its authors’ approach, one which defies simple answers in favour of ambivalent ones.

Accordingly, the first chapter considers folklore, broadly defined as “the living performance of tradition” (p. 25), and notes simultaneously that such insolent internet activities as “RIP trolling” (p. 43), that is mocking the dead on memorial pages seriously constructed for them, merely extend a practice apparent in the funeral rites of, particularly for the authors, Newfoundland. Just as the precise motives behind these customs remain indefinable, so the anonymity and flexibility inherent in social media platforms may well defeat any attempt to ascribe an irrefutable meaning to the messages they contain. Rather than accepting simple solutions, Phillips and Milner seek to explore the potential effects of the ambivalence characterising such messages.

Chapter two relates more to the individual and the identities created by him/her, seen (à la Goffman) as a series of masks adopted according to the situation in which individuals find themselves. The authors are keen to refute the idea that the anonymity of the web sets up different processes from those operating in what is erroneously distinguished from it as real life, although they do aver that it offers more opportunities to play with identity, hence the various types of deception achieved by internet hoaxers, seducers, and conmen. These actions do have comic potential and can result in the scapegoating of legitimate targets, as when racist Facebook groups are infiltrated by fake supporters. Somewhat less laudable are the exponents of sexting in which potential fun coexists with opportunities for abuse.

Chapter three concerns humor directly, noting, as were it needed, how hard is the latter to define, but concentrating on what has been termed clan-based satire, that is the deliberate targeting of outgroups with aggressive intent. "Constitutive humor" (as the chapter is titled) is therefore a factor in clan formation, and implies its opposite, destructive humor, a point illustrated by an intriguing account of the history of Tommy Wiseau's movie *The Room* (2003). This picture, at least once described as one of the worst films ever made, spawned a cult following that created its own rituals of audience participation and the celebration of cinematic ineptitude and bad acting. Bakhtinian theories of praise-abuse and the carnivalesque would have supported this section well, more particularly as the Russian insisted that the laughter he identified in Rabelaisian unorthodoxy was a targeted laughter.

The internet has, via its extreme flexibility, enabled constitutive humor to extend ever further into the absurd and the deliberately offensive, witness the examples here included of 9/11 jokes. Given that posts are so frequently anonymous and divorced from context, it becomes difficult to know how to respond appropriately to them, for "one person's joke is another person's punch to the gut" (p. 125), a somewhat obvious point but sound nonetheless, and one which may have significant implications for one's sense of humor.

Constitutive humor is thus a means whereby clans are created, but also one whereby non-participants are pushed into an outgroup of those unfamiliar or uncomfortable with the assumptions binding the clan. However those reactions are themselves flexible, not to say ambivalent, as one lays aside such values as respect for the suffering of the 9/11 victims in order to respond, however guiltily, to what such jokes imply. Moreover when in chapter four the authors move to a consideration of "Collective Storytelling", they seem similarly prescriptive: to say that "the existence of, . . . stories depends on the audience as much as the teller" (p. 130) seems not so much counterintuitive as self-evident, and again any student of Bakhtinian dialogue would promptly deny that storytellers are "the active narrative agent" while "the audience is presumed to be more passive" (p. 131).

In fact Bakhtin does emerge as a key theorist of heteroglossia, but Phillips and Milner's related material on "narrative bricolage" (p. 133: aka intertextuality) is something any student of narratology will take for granted rather than presuming "the autonomy of a given narrative" (ibid.), and though their subsequent study of urban legends is engaging, we surely do not need to be told that different audiences will interpret on their own terms "each iteration of each tale" (p. 139). Iser taught us long ago that to fill in the gaps in a story was one of the delights, not to say defining processes of literary readership, and the principle of dialogism precludes any clear distinction of "a storytelling *me*" from "a storytelling *we*" (p. 146). In fact this chapter concentrates little on humor, though some of the tales it summarises will amuse as well as horrify. The main point it makes is to highlight the extent to which the internet has facilitated the adaptation and appropriation of narrative motifs and plots, all of which processes enhance the ambivalence fundamental to reader response.

Turning in a final chapter to the subject of public debate, the authors consider the implications firstly of the success of the online campaign to name a British research vessel Boaty McBoatface, a success thwarted by the humourless authorities who thus defied a public vote they had themselves facilitated. It was surely a response to humor that motivated the majority of those who voted Boaty, something less true, one suspects, of the next popular movement considered, namely Trump's victory in the 2016 U. S. presidential election. Certainly for me a figure of fun, and thus not unique among American politicians, Trump is in fact analysed seriously, the point being to prove how much emotion can compete with rationality in stimulating political support (and opposition). Trump's tweets provide ample evidence, but the campaign of 1800 between Jefferson and Adams was similarly outspoken and indecorous. Meanwhile the image manipulation

that internet users undertook prior to the election particularly to mock the current occupant of the White House also reveals to what degree ardour is entangled with reason in the formation and expression of opinion.

What the internet has brought to this process is a much more immediate and direct contact with any figure made the target of satire. However, the ambivalence inherent to online communications makes it difficult to distinguish sincerity from mere game-playing, and the point is amply confirmed in the book's Conclusion which is predominantly dedicated to an anti-Trump YouTube video entitled "Trump Effect". Using to good effect many of the themes elucidated in their previous chapters, the authors stress particularly the notion that by examining abnormality (dubbed in this context weirdness), one can achieve a fuller awareness and thus critique of a society's cultural norms. Weird the video certainly is, but because it is open to many interpretations, some of them in fact favourable to its apparent target, it provides ample evidence of the indeterminacies, incongruities and, yes, ambivalences that have been examined throughout.

Chatty often to the point of ungrammaticality, the text remains consistent (in its study of inconsistency), and surely provides a stimulating guide to a medium which, for better or worse, will continue to characterise if not even dominate modern communication.

Recueil des facéties Parisiennes: pour les six premiers mois de d'an 1760

Reviewed by Haydn Mason, University of Bristol, United Kingdom

Graham Gargett, Philip Stewart et al., Eds. (2015). *Recueil des facéties parisiennes: pour les six premiers mois de d'an 1760* (Complete works of Voltaire, vol. 51A). Oxford, UK: Voltaire Foundation. xxx+592 pp. ISBN 978-0-7294-1071-7.

This collection of articles, not all from Voltaire's own pen, belongs to a particular moment in his career: the first six months of 1760. It contains a miscellany of polemical pieces, later brought together by Voltaire himself in a single volume, but all responses of different kinds to two separate but related quarrels between on the one hand the *philosophes* and on the other Jean-Jacques Le Franc de Pompignan and Charles Palissot de Montenoy. This fine critical edition, with contributions from a distinguished team of scholars, unravels the complex history of this volume and the acrimonious disputes from which it arose.

Already acclaimed as the author of *Candide* (1758), Voltaire was increasingly recognised as the “general of the *Encyclopédie*” (p.26), spearheading the campaign of the *philosophes* against the hegemonic dominance of the Catholic Church, backed politically by both “throne and altar” (p.18). Though moderate in its actual opinions, the *Encyclopédie*, the flagship work of that movement, had represented from 1750 a more secularist call for religious toleration, but the fact that it lost the official privilege to print within only a few years was a clear indication of an increasingly hostile political climate.

This skeletal account must suffice to indicate the setting in which Voltaire would play a prominent role. Surprisingly, the central position that he was to occupy was not at first of his own making. The marquis de Pompignan, elected to the Académie Française on 10 March 1760, had used his inaugural speech to denounce the present state of French culture, which he described as having a “depraved literature” and “corrupt morality”, the consequence of “distorted facts and anecdotes” appearing in satirical attacks on “the most sacred elements and the soundest maxims of government”. This denunciation was the opening volley in the battle between the *philosophes* and their opponents. In addition, Pompignan's adulatory praise for Maupertuis, his predecessor in the Académie, implicitly aligned him with Voltaire's enemies: few would have been unaware of the bitter quarrel between Maupertuis and the *philosophe* initiated a few years earlier.

The absence of Voltaire's name stands out as a thinly veiled insult in this eulogy of Maupertuis –so much so that Pompignan was initially triumphant and “enflé de vaine gloire” [puffed up with pride], as Marmontel put it (p.4). This he was very soon to regret, and permanently. However, our concern here must be with Voltaire and the nature of his polemical humour.

The very miscellany of the items comprising this *Recueil* puts the reviewer in an awkward position, though certain details are helpful in indicating priorities amongst them. Voltaire is pre-eminent in the collection, which opens with *Les Quand*, his speedy response to Pompignan's speech. As early as fifteen days afterwards, he was impatiently enquiring of the publishers how soon it would appear, though when it

did so, at the end of March 1760, he at once unsurprisingly denied that it was his composition. But his disclaimer was expressed with typical ambivalence, even hinting at a certain authorial pride – “il me prend envie de les avoir faits” [It makes me wish I had written them] – and he did not conceal his basic hostility to Pompignan: “Ce discours est bien indécent, bien révoltant, il met en colère” [This speech is highly indecent, deeply revolting and it enrages me] (pp. 4-7).

Pompignan reacted furiously to this pamphlet, much to Voltaire's delight, he returning to the attack later that year in a more directly satirical mode, as witness for example the *Assemblée des monosyllabes* (the second item in the *Facéties*), which he entertainingly includes among the “*rafale* [storm] de pompignades” (p. 26) in the *Receuil*. In the *Assemblée*, he uses the same anaphoric device as he had in *Les Quand*, but this time in verse. He takes the simplest of grammatical terms (Les Pour, les Que, les Qui, les Quoi, et les Non (the monosyllables referred to in the title of the poem), but in a series of end-rhymes neatly weaves the marquis's long-winded name into a fusillade of sarcasms. Voltaire asks gleefully whether it is fair that this mockery should be sustained with such fury [*acharnement*] (p.40) and elsewhere in the collection he even includes a mock apologia entitled *La Vanité* (pp.167-189). However, it is only right, as he had made clear in *Les Quand*, that his readers be told the truth about the marquis, who was “à peine homme de lettres, et nullement philosophe” [scarcely a man of letters and in no way a philosopher] (p. 19). How could such a man have the effrontery to declare that “notre *nation* (my italics: 'nation' was still an emotive term in 1760) n'a qu'une fausse littérature et une vaine philosophie” [our nation has only a false literature and an empty philosophy] (p.19)? Such scandalous defamation beggars belief and the lapidary brilliance of Voltaire's wit should not distract us from his genuine sense of outrage and of profound insult. Much more arrogant than a vulgar glory-seeker, Pompignan had dared to subvert the reputation of the Académie, brazenly setting himself up as an arbiter of taste, when he had a prose style as heavy as that of an inept attorney (“style lourd d'un méchant procureur” (p.27) and had only vanity and self-belief as a basis for his pronouncements.

The *Quand* statements mirror the equivocal nature of the *philosophe* himself, for this momentous work consists of a mere nine unequal paragraphs which are only loosely related to the title *Facéties*, an unusual term designating a drollery intended to amuse in a vulgar manner (q.v. *Dictionnaire de l'Académie*, 1786, “Bouffonnerie [...] souvent de la bassesse”). The charge against Pompignan was anything but frivolous; he is guilty of a literal calumny both of the Académie itself and of the entire cultural world, and as a result of his *Discours*, he has ceased in Voltaire's eyes to be a respectable colleague and become instead an unremitting purveyor of myth in its most pernicious sense, a pattern that evokes the horrors of religious wars like the Crusades, which Voltaire's own world-history (the *Essai sur les moeurs*) would later go on to describe.

Yet savage disapproval does not sufficiently characterise Voltaire's stance, nor yet does satire. Nor, either, does he deny that some rare geniuses exist who recognise the awful truths of the world while also having the courage to work for its preservation and improvement. It is after all neither wholly barbaric nor yet “the best of all possible worlds” (as Leibniz, in the shape of Pangloss, would have it). When then you add stylistic mastery to a bravura display of learning, you begin to approach the phenomenon that is Voltaire.

Rire: Revue française de psychanalyse

Reviewed by John Parkin, University of Bristol, United Kingdom

Pascale Navarri & Michel Picco, Eds. (2017). *Rire: Revue française de psychanalyse*, vol. 81.1. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France. ISSN: 0035-2942.

After a brief editorial followed by an introduction where the editors sketch each subsequent contribution against a background of Freudian theory, we are presented with fourteen papers on laughter, the remaining sections of the volume (“Recherches” and “Revue”) falling outside the range of humor studies. The first piece, by Françoise Coblence, is a mere two pages long but does raise interesting connections between laughter and death, bearing in mind the *Charlie Hebdo* massacre of January 2015. Bertrand Tillier follows this with a study of caricature which, however well documented, concentrates too much on the satiric rather than celebratory functions of the genre: it surely begs the question to claim that laughing at a powerful

figure necessarily constitutes a transgression and that caricature must therefore be subversive, however many examples may support that case. By contrast when he turns from the emotions that caricature may engender to consider its actual nature as at once deforming and imitative, he enters safer ground, leaving his (questionable) authorities behind (Bergson, Baudelaire, Freud).

Freud returns, and massively, in Jean-Pierre Kamieniak's somewhat exclamatory treatment of the Austrian's approach to female sexuality and the taboos surrounding it at the time, these being sufficiently strong to necessitate a use of Latin words in their discussion. What one assuredly notes is how prejudicial these attitudes now seem, given that Sigmund even discouraged a reading of Balzac and Cervantes by his daughter and fiancée respectively, while in arguing that smut was a male preserve he was doing little more than making a fool of himself. Jacqueline Schaeffer enters similar territory in discussing the examples of the biblical Sarah, who laughed at the thought of her senile pregnancy, and Baubo, who cured Demeter's depression by comically exposing her own private parts. Such readings facilitate a revision of Freud's preconceptions concerning female laughter, especially when related to sex and obscenity, Baubo serving as one of his examples: she is symbolic of the male castration complex but also of female desire. As for the taboos surrounding that laughter, Schaeffer notes how female companies indulge it at the expense of a targeted male, a good example of clan-based satire and a telling inversion of Freud's thoughts on how masculine humour tends to insult an absent woman. In fact the laughter of these legendary females had positive implications as representing a triumph over age and death. Denys Ribas then revives Bergson's theories on laughter as representing a resistance to the comical mechanisation of life, its prerequisite being a suppression of empathy (theories of course now long refuted). In fact Freud's own theory of what he called "*Humor*," illustrated by a significant anecdote concerning his own persecution by the SS, helps illustrate the weakness of Bergson's essay by exemplifying not the derisive force of laughter but rather its capacity for sublimation.

Opening a second section ("Le rire dans la clinique avec l'enfant"), Christine Anzieu-Premmereur considers the importance of play in infant development, referring to the case of a maladjusted toddler whom she helped to reintegrate into its somewhat dysfunctional family and noting the different types of response and laughter that the child produced during treatment. In a similar study Nicole Llopis-Salvan recounts how her nine-year-old patient Albertine emitted various sorts of laughter in her progress towards normality, while Jacques, an aged man troubled by filial anxiety, underwent a step change in his therapy once he had laughed at her remark concerning the alienated mother who was his mental target. In both cases the positive move was away from a maniacal laughter of fear to an expression of shared pleasure. Sylvie Reignier then supplies a further case-study in her analysis of the laughter uttered by an autistic three-year-old during imitation games shared with herself as psychotherapist, surely a positive development even if far from denoting a conclusive cure.

Berdj Papazian broadens his enquiry by relating giggling (*le fou rire*) to infantile sexuality and orgasm, a sexual connotation of which giggling adults are often, it seems, aware. Such a general approach, however, is illustrated only by a single example, drawn again from therapy sessions but which can scarcely be regarded as a definitive confirmation, while in a longer enquiry Philippe Valon considers the implications of laughter by both patient and therapist during sessions of analysis and psychodrama. The latter is a particularly fruitful area for study given that role-play involves more types of communication than mere question and answer. Nevertheless the discharge of energy effected by the laughter that such role-plays generate may, by absorbing some of the bonus of pleasure, actually inhibit the healing process, even if its key function is to indicate an influx of emotion and desire.

Maniacal laughter returns as the subject of Martine Girard's chapter as she notes its close proximity to tears, its association with physical contortions, with logorrhoea and, in terms of psychology, with anguish and depression. Her terms of reference range from Plato to Tintin and include intriguing examples drawn once again from her own clinical experience. Benoît Servant turns to politics for a source of analogy with his psychiatric work, noting how laughter and humour, as expressions of human freedom, can be the only weapons by which victims seek to defend themselves against State oppression or, more significantly for the clinician, against coercion within the family and its resultant traumas. That those weapons may well prove inadequate is proved by the unsatisfactory nature of the wisecracking and giggling that various of Servant's patients maintained, for what they needed, he suggests, was to regain confidence in the world perhaps via

their relationship with a therapist deploying *humour tendre* rather than comicality. That notion reappears in Clarisse Baruch's broad-ranging study of "Le rire: mi-ange, mi-démon" (laughter: half angel, half devil) where the analyst is ideally the kind-hearted superego, a consoling voice that reduces fear in the patient and supplies an explicit analogy with, again, Freudian *Humor*. The theme is illustrated once more with practical scenes of psychodrama.

The final communication, by Tefrika Ikiz, recalls how the Gezi park protests unleashed in Turkey in 2013 led to outbreaks of violence and then a change in the complexion of that country's humor whereby it was spread via social media and websites exploiting black humor, grotesque satire, and shameless mockery in an attempt to assert freedom and express popular energy. The topic is intriguing and the treatment informative enough to warrant more extensive coverage. However, like others', Ikiz's apparatus remains too dependent on Freudian categories, and he makes the classic error of concluding his argument with a quotation: surely he himself had and indeed has more to offer on the subject.

The compositions are at times curiously infected with note-from, not to mention agrammaticality and typos, but, those weaknesses apart, one can only draw benefit from the rich field of investigation that psychotherapy continues to supply, ably exploited by its practitioners.

Recent Publications



The Routledge Handbook of Language and Humor

Salvatore Attardo, Ed. (2017). *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Humor*. New York, NY: Routledge. 540 pp. Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-138-84306-6; EBook ISBN: 978-1-315-73116-2.

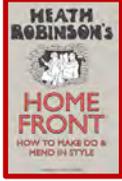
From the Publisher: *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Humor* presents the first ever comprehensive, in-depth treatment of all the sub-fields of the linguistics of humor, broadly conceived as the intersection of the study of language and humor. The reader will find a thorough historical, terminological, and theoretical introduction to the field, as well as detailed treatments of the various approaches to language and humor. Deliberately comprehensive and wide-ranging, the handbook includes chapter-long treatments on the traditional topics covered by language and humor (e.g., teasing, laughter, irony, psycholinguistics, discourse analysis, the major linguistic theories of humor, translation) but also cutting-edge treatments of internet humor, cognitive linguistics, relevance theoretic, and corpus-assisted models of language and humor. Some chapters, such as the variationist sociolinguistics, stylistics, and politeness are the first-ever syntheses of that particular subfield. Clusters of related chapters, such as conversation analysis, discourse analysis and corpus-assisted analysis allow multiple perspectives on complex trans-disciplinary phenomena. This handbook is an indispensable reference work for all researchers interested in the interplay of language and humor, within linguistics, broadly conceived, but also in neighboring disciplines such as literary studies, psychology, sociology, anthropology, etc. The authors are among the most distinguished scholars in their fields.



Transgressive Humor of American Women Writers

Sabrina Fuchs Abrams, Ed. (2017). *Transgressive Humor of American Women Writers*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. 264 pp. Hardcover ISBN: 978-3-319-56728-0; EBook ISBN: 978-3-319-56729-7.

From the Publisher: This collection is the first to focus on the iconoclastic and transformative power of American female humorists. It explores the work of authors and comediennees such as Samantha Bee, Amy Schumer, Lucille Clifton, Constance Rourke, Carolyn Wells, and Lynne Tillman while drawing on various theories of humor including the incongruity superiority/disparagement, and relief theories. The chapters draw from the experiences of women from a variety of racial, class, and gender identities and encompass a variety of genres and comedic forms including poetry, fiction, prose, autobiography, graphic memoir, comedic performance, and new media. *Transgressive Humor of American Women Writers* will appeal to a general educated readership as well as to those interested in women's and gender studies, humor studies, urban studies, American literature and cultural studies, and media studies.



Heath Robinson's Second World War and Home Front

W. Heath Robinson (2016). *Heath Robinson's Second World War: The Satirical Cartoons.* Oxford: Bodleian Library. 158 pp. ISBN: 978-1-85124-443-0.

W. Heath Robinson & Cecil Hunt (2016). *Heath Robinson's Home Front: How to Make Do and Mend in Style.* Oxford, UK: Bodleian Library. 128 pp. ISBN: 978-1-85124-444-7.

From Moira Marsh, Indiana University: W. Heath Robinson's cartoons were famous for elaborate improbable, Rube-Goldberg-like contraptions. *Heath Robinson's Second World War* comprises cartoons first published in various places between 1939 and 1942, presented here with a Foreword by Geoffrey Beare. The gentle satire in Heath's work targeted British forces and the enemy alike, for example: "The Ubiquitous Winston: Disguised as a German U-Boat, the First Lord Torpedos Ducks in the Round Pond to Give the Nazis a Bad Name" (p. 76); and "Mussolini's Secret Weapon Disclosed!" (an anti-tank gun that fires backwards, p. 125). In *Home Front* (first published in 1939), Heath's cartoons accompany a text by Cecil Hunt (known for his published collections of schoolchildren's "howlers"), giving a wryly humorous spin on British citizens' responses to rationing, air raids, and blackouts. Hunt calls Heath the "Minister for Home Comforts," and describes the contribution of the minister's study to the war effort: "This room alone will so puzzle the outriders that the invasion will be held up for several valuable minutes" (p. 105).

Recent Articles in Humor Studies

The Humorous Times announces recent articles from *HUMOR: International Journal of Humor Research* and by researchers who publish elsewhere within humor studies. The following list, compiled by the ISHS Executive Secretary, includes humor studies articles published since March 2017. If you have a recent publication, let us know. We will include it in a future newsletter.

- Aksan, G. E. (2017). 'The new but lonely voice against the authoritarianism': humor and irony in Turkish political discourse after the Taksim Gezi Park Protests. *European Journal of Humor Research*, 5(2), 23-50.
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- Bessant, J. (2017). New politics and satire: the Euro financial crisis and the one-finger salute. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20(7), 1057-1072. doi:10.1080/1369118X.2016.1206138
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- Dionigi, A. (2017). Clowning as a complementary approach for reducing iatrogenic effects in pediatrics. *AMA Journal of Ethics*, 19, 775-782.
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- Fiadotava, A. (2017). School and the value of knowledge: Transformations in Belarusian jokes about education. *European Journal of Humor Research*, 5(2), 51-70.
- Filani, I. (2017). Politics of Humor and Political Humor in Nigerian Stand-Up Comedy. *Israeli Journal of Humor Research: An International Journal*, 6(1), 93-109.
- Ford, T. E., Teeter, S. R., Richardson, K., & Woodzicka, J. A. (2017). Putting the brakes on prejudice rebound effects: An ironic effect of disparagement humor. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 157, 458-473. doi:10.1080/00224545.2016.1229254

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In Remembrance



Christie Davies

December 25, 1941-August 26, 2017

From Giseline Kuipers, Professor of Cultural Sociology, University of Amsterdam

Christie Davies, esteemed humor scholar and beloved colleague, passed away on August 26, 2017 after a brief illness. Everyone who has ever attended an ISHS conference remembers Christie. For his khaki fishing jacket, his outrageous ties and his many keynote lectures about (and containing many) ethnic jokes. But also for his astute interventions, his wide-ranging knowledge, and his unending interest in new ideas and new humor scholars. The field of humor studies, as well as the work of many individual humor scholars, would not have looked the same without Christie. It would have been much less rigorous, international, original – and of course much less funny.

A central member of the humor studies community since the first conference in Cardiff in 1976, Christie has made a lasting mark on the field. With his comparative work on jokes, he opened up a whole new field of inquiry: the systematic comparative analysis of humor and its relation to society. Moreover, Christie's work shaped the contours of the field: rigorously empirical, often comparative, the socio-cultural segment of humor studies is wary of critical or poststructuralist theory, and remarkably tolerant of the work of humanists, historians, psychologists and even linguists. Finally, Christie has been an important mentor to academics from around the world, including myself. He offered younger scholars advice, encouragement and friendship. This friendship-cum-mentorship took typical Christie-esque forms: odd postcards, often anonymous (it took me some time to figure out who sent me these cards with images of Dutch "cheese

women” in traditional costumes), mock insults, and, after the advent of digital photography: emails with unflattering pictures taken surreptitiously during conferences. But behind Christie’s practical jokes always lay affection and deep intellectual engagement.

Christie Davies was born on Christmas day of 1941. He was a proud Welshman, who loved to show off his mastery of Welsh consonants. His Welsh patriotism is reflected in the protagonist of his children’s book: a Welsh dragon called Dewi. He was educated at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he was both a member of the Footlights revue, and the President of the Cambridge Union debating society. After graduating with a double first (for non-UK readers: this is very good) in economics, and brief stints in Australia and Leeds, Christie worked at the University of Reading for most of his academic life. His early research focused on the sociology of morality: the death penalty, law, censorship, regulation of drugs and tobacco, and sexual taboos. He kept returning to this field throughout his career. His interest in humor sprang from this work on morality. In 1982, he almost simultaneously published articles in the two premier sociology journals that reflect this close link. The paper in the *American Journal of Sociology* analyzed sexual taboos and social boundaries, whereas his contribution in the *British Journal of Sociology* dealt with ethnic jokes, moral values and social boundaries.

Since the 1980s, Christie published a series of path-breaking works on humor. He wrote dozens of articles, as well as four monographs: his early masterpiece *Ethnic Humor Around the World* (1990), his most programmatic book *Jokes and Their Relations to Society* (1998), his tour de force *The Mirth of Nations* (2002) and his final death-blow to aggression and superiority theories of humor, *Jokes and Targets* (2011). In this work, Christie pursued three aims. He developed a systematic comparative-historical analysis of humor as a distinct form of expression, which he defined as “play with aggression”. He analyzed humor as a socio-cultural expression that cannot be reduced to individual motivations – including, but not limited to aggression and superiority. Finally, he levelled a strong attack against popular and one-dimensional “theories” of humor, which he revealed to be untestable, circular and somewhat implausible statements. This is a grand research program, which he made manageable with one genius move: he mined the well-archived, easily comparable, largely unexplored field of jokes. Because jokes rely on retelling, they only exist when many people find them relevant (note that this was pre-internet. Today, many irrelevant jokes live on indefinitely, as do many other irrelevant things.). This insight led Christie to explore folklore archives, finding largely similar jokes around the world. (With the exception of Japan, which made for another fascinating article). Christie was the first to recognize the sociological relevance of jokes as “social facts” and cultural “thermometers”.

I first met Christie 1997, in a hot, remote, deserted university campus in Edmond, Oklahoma. This was the first of many meetings around the world, often far from the tourist crowd, for conferences and summer schools from Romania to Osaka, Groningen to Skokie. As it was for many others before and after me, the first meeting with Christie was a surprise (The shock could have been worse, though: unlike others, I did expect this “Christie” to be male). This famous professor did not look professorial at all, and he was remarkably approachable. He was also very interested in my work (though not uncritical), appeared to know everything about everything, seemed to have political viewpoints that I had never before encountered in a social scientist (but that he defended with great wit, clarity and conviction), and was a central figure in a lively and unconventional community of humor scholars.

In the 20 years since Oklahoma, I learned many things from Christie. Academic lessons, for instance: scholarly rigor is even more important in frivolous themes. Comparison is at the core of sociology. What many people call a theory really is not a theory at all. No one can build a scholarly career on humor alone. Try to like what you study (which is completely different from the rather vacuous advice to study what you like), because you will not understand it otherwise. Always listen to junior scholars, they ask the best questions. Christie introduced me to Inuit art and the Good Soldier Švejk, to Scottish puffins, deep-fried Mars Bars and English hedges, to Japanese stone gardens, British operas and American bumper stickers. He told me the best jokes, and how to tell them. Maybe most importantly: from Christie, I learned that you can respect someone for their thinking, even be good friends with them, when you disagree with them about many things. Knowing Christie has sharpened my thinking, and broadened my mind. Christie Davies has made me think, and he has made me laugh. Moreover, he has shown that these things—laughter and thought—have a lot in common.



Christie Davies

December 25, 1941-August 26, 2017

From Władysław Chłopicki, Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland

I am convinced that the entire community of humour scholars worldwide needs to be aware of the experience that the lucky ones of us, including myself, have had: the privilege of researching humour with Christie Davies—a voice of support and criticism or—as the case may be—affectionate ridicule. Christie was a figure of vast expertise, wide international and intercultural experience and understanding, author of numerous books and articles on humour as well as on broader sociological topics, such as religion or morality, a true scholar, and at the same time a person of lovely disposition, always ready to tell a joke on any subject, but also always ready to learn new potentially challenging facts.

I first talked to him during the humour conference in Sheffield, England in 1990, having read his fundamental study, *Ethnic Humour Around the World*, and having noticed that among the tellers and targets of stupidity jokes there was no mention of Poland and that some Polish names from American Polish jokes, such as Dumbrowski, were curiously misspelt in the book. He was already a well-known humour scholar then, and I was only a recent graduate and staff member of Jagiellonian University's Department of English. I tentatively extended an invitation for him to visit and lecture in Poland, where he had never been, which to my surprise he readily accepted. From then on he became a frequent guest in Poland, including a several lecture visits (such as the memorable one in Kraków's Jewish Cultural Centre, where he brilliantly handled most awkward of questions), a keynote and tutorial at the 2012 ISHS conference in Kraków as well as a several-week-long stay in Krosno State College in south-eastern Poland, where he taught Polish students the intricacies of telling jokes in English. During one of his early visits, he witnessed a Polish election day, and among the candidates listed on the wall poster of the polling station was a person called Dąbrowski, which I pointed out to him and said: "Christie, this is how you should spell the name!", which he greeted with hearty laughter, arousing suspicion among the electoral officers.

Christie was the only person I know who had a very systematic, and one may say longitudinal, approach both to joke collection and his conference topics. He had large notebooks he brought from each humour conference – and he attended dozens of them since the first one in Cardiff in 1976—as well as every foreign trip, where he noted down every single joke he heard in his one and only handwriting. I remember a few of such joke noting sessions at my home, where he stayed a few times. An excellent speaker, he was also well known for speaking *ex-tempore* at every humour conference (he held Power-points in disregard) and his topic usually concerned ethnic jokes about the nation where the conference was held – so in Kraków he courageously spoke of Polack jokes, and he employed a similar strategy in Hong Kong, Australia, Norway, Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Denmark, Ireland, Estonia, Japan, or Netherlands, and most recently in Montreal, Canada – where he delivered a lecture on Newfoundlander jokes. His point throughout the long time of his academic study of jokes was that they describe fictitious reality, but this fictitious reality has some basis in historical and social facts, and most importantly—that jokes are not symptoms of social conflict, but "play with aggression."

He practiced what he preached about jokes, so one could wonder if the jokes actually are about playing with aggression, or was it just him using them that way. Teasing was one example of such play: one of his favorite jokes was sending emails to friends which referred them to the spoof or mock news or articles he had found. It is enough to quote the titles of his emails to me, largely drawing on religion or ethnicity: "Columbus was Polish. Italians and George Bush furious", "Stalin the Pole on Film in Polish", "Britain learns of another Polish scandal", "Scottish poem incomprehensible to Poles", "Polish Catholics heading for Kenya", "Hrabia [=Polish count] wants to fight a duel in UK", "Polish groveling or is it tactlessness?" "Pope Jan Pavel's new miracle" (this referred to the rather unwise comment of the Peruvian president on the killing of Bin Laden), and so on. His special comic strategy was sending a message to his close friend, a Jewish rabbi, and myself, saying something like "A curious conversion of a Polish rabbi in Rome", "Pole converts to Judaism", "Poles burn down mosque", "Poles as brutes" or "Not kosher?", and waiting for indignant responses from both parties, who would then start arguing much to his delight. He also kept giving me examples of "Polish" words, such as "paskudnik", which were obviously Yiddish, the

playful reference being to the uneasy relationship of Poles and Jews, at the same time underscoring the relative mildness of the conflict – our love-hate relationship.

Christie generally delighted in playing the ethnic card since another of his major points about humour was that ethnic references were one of the most efficient and successful techniques in jokes, and that they should not be suppressed by the rising wave of political correctness. He enjoyed the clashes of ethnic references himself too, as for example when my 7-year-old son received a stuffed advertising doll with a black face from him and immediately called it Mr. Davies, Christie almost fell about laughing, to use his favorite phrase. His personal playing with aggression is very well visible in the following totally politically incorrect e-mail dialogue (apologies to all Nigerians, no offence is meant):

Me: An interesting piece of news from Kraków. Two ticket controllers were bitten by a Nigerian passenger on a city bus, when they try to check his ID, as he did not have a valid ticket, whereupon he escaped through a window. They followed him, caught him, and before the police came were repeatedly bitten again so they ended up in hospital.

Christie: Why didn't the Poles kick his teeth in so he could not bite? Deport him quick before the human rights shit is invoked.

Me: Update on the Nigerian story - he is HIV positive (I should have figured this out) and tomorrow the poor ticket controller will know if he has been infected... Fingers crossed.

Christie: Life without parole to be served in Poland's worst jail with the other prisoners knowing about what he did.

Christie's playfulness with aggression is very clear when one recalls what he was like towards other scholars, whom he all treated like friends and was ready to listen to them, regardless where they came from and how mistaken they were in their views on humour. I can very well recall once entering late in the packed lecture room where he was speaking, whereupon he interrupted the lecture and said: "I would like to welcome my friend Władysław Chłopiccki from Poland, whose wife is a very good cook". He loved taking photos of other attendees of the humour conferences from the least favorable angles and then sending it to them as a gift. He also used to love sending postcards to them from the places he visited, choosing such that would make them laugh and cringe at the same time (e.g. Mussolini postcards to his Italian friends). He would use the same strategy when replying to awkward or emotional questions asked of him after his very numerous lectures, in addition skillfully intermingling a word or phrase in the language of the questioner.

An eccentric in the best sense of the word, loving his khaki jackets with many pockets and oversized jungle hats, his loud ties with the local national flag of his audience on them, as well as over-worn checkered shirts; a book-worm, an admirer of art, a teetotaler, a lover of his native Wales, a lover of nature walks, an accomplished teller of ethnic jokes to smaller and larger audiences, a modest and warm-hearted man of great mind.

Christie, we shall all miss your friendship, but there is your legacy to remember, cherish and develop. We shall do so. Rest in peace!



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