

# The Humorous Times

Newsletter of the International Society for Humor Studies

Summer/Fall 2021

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## Association News

### 2021 ISHS Membership and Finances

Martin Lampert, ISHS Secretary-Treasurer



The International Society for Humor Studies had a good year in 2021 with 221 affiliates, including 212 new and returning members and 9 additional Board Members and Consulting Editors of the journal, *HUMOR*. At the October 31 close of 2021 membership, the Society was again financially sound with \$74,902.19 in unaudited revenue including \$59,174.19 carried over from 2021 and \$15,728.00 from 2021 membership dues and fees. Operating expenses for 2021 included \$1,000.25 for online services, and \$12,498.00 anticipated for membership subscriptions to *HUMOR: International Journal for Humor Research*. Revenue over expenses by the end of 2021 is estimated to be \$61,403.44.

Between December 1, 2020 and October 30, 2021, Holy Names University received an additional \$1,377.12 for the ISHS Scholarship fund. On October 31, the scholarship fund held \$23,022.13. At each ISHS Conference, the Society presents three to four graduate student awards. Because the Society postponed its Conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Society did not make graduate student awards in 2021. As always, I would like to thank the members who made contributions to the ISHS Scholarship Fund, and I would welcome others to make donations with their 2021 membership applications for future scholarships.

We look forward to another great year in 2022 with the publication of the 35th volume of *HUMOR* and, assuming the relaxing of COVID-19 restrictions, the Society's 32nd international conference at the University of Bologna from June 27 to July 2, 2022. You will be able to register and submit paper proposals for the 2022 Conference online at the Conference website at <https://eventi.unibo.it/ishs-2022>. If you would like to host the next or a future ISHS Conference, you can contact me for more information on how to submit a Conference proposal.

You can join the Society or renew your ISHS membership for 2022 on the Society's website at [www.humorstudies.org](http://www.humorstudies.org). On the membership page, you will find a link that will allow you to renew your membership. On the online application form, you will see the Society's current fee structure, which offers membership with either an online or print subscription to the Society's journal, *HUMOR*. For the current year, *HUMOR* will have more original research articles, and print subscribers will receive online access to the 2022 *HUMOR* book reviews, which will be published only online. Membership is still \$69 with an online subscription and \$130 with a print subscription. Subscribing members who join or renew by January 31 can take a \$5.00 discount. Please note that renewal includes a 3% plus \$1 processing fee. If you do not wish to receive the journal, but do wish to be a member to receive our other benefits, you can still join ISHS as an Associate member for just \$30 plus processing.

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## Fall Newsletter Staff

Goh Abe (Japan):  
gohabe@green.ocn.ne.jp  
Guo-Hai Chen (China):  
mypeer2002@hotmail.com.  
Martin Lampert (USA):  
lampert@hnu.edu  
Moirra Marsh (USA):  
molsmith@indiana.edu  
Julia Rayz (USA)  
jtaylor1@purdue.edu  
Eric Weitz (Ireland):  
weitzer@tcd.ie

## Next Issue

The next *The Humorous Times* is due Winter 2022.

Finally, thank you for your support of the International Society for Humor Studies. Your participation in ISHS helps to advance the importance of humor research and, as always, is greatly appreciated.

## 2021 ISHS Election

Every two years, the International Society for Humor Studies holds an election for ISHS President and for two new Members-at-Large to the ISHS Executive Board. The new ISHS President will serve for two years, from January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2023, and will take over from Patrice Oppliger (Boston University, USA), who will continue on the ISHS Board as the immediate Past President. The new Members-at-Large will replace Sammy Basu (Willamette University, USA) and Will Noonan (University of Bourgogne, France) who have served on the ISHS Board since January 2018. The new Board Members will serve for four years from January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2025.

For our 2021 Election, the Society is pleased to present the following two candidates for ISHS President and ten candidates for ISHS Board Member-at-Large. Online balloting will open November 28, 2021 and will continue through December 28, 2021.

### Candidates for ISHS President



#### Sharon Lockyer, PhD (Brunel University, London, UK)

Sharon Lockyer is a Reader in Sociology and Communications at Brunel University London, UK. She is the Founding Director of the Centre for Comedy Studies Research (CCSR), the first international interdisciplinary research centre devoted to the academic study of comedy. As CCSR Director, she has successfully built links between the academic study of comedy and humour and a network of researchers and professional practitioners. Her research focuses on the sociology of humour and comedy, critical comedy studies, humour and identity and the ethics and aesthetics of humorous discourse. Sharon received her PhD in 2002 for a thesis entitled *An Eye to Offensiveness: The Discourse of Offence and Censure in Private Eye* from Loughborough University, UK. Her edited and co-edited volumes include *Reading Little Britain: Comedy Matters on Contemporary Television* (2010), *Beyond a Joke: The Limits of Humour* (2005/2009), *Controversial Images: Media Representations on the Edge* (2012), and *Screening the Undead: Vampires and Zombies in Film and Television* (2014), and *Alternative Comedy Now and Then: Critical Perspectives* (2022). Sharon is the Founding co-editor of the *Palgrave Studies in Comedy* book series and the author of numerous book chapters and journal articles on humour and comedy.

Sharon has presented regularly at ISHS Conferences since 1999 and received the ISHS Emerging Scholar Award in 2004. She has also taught for the ISHS-endorsed International Summer School and Symposium on Humour and Laughter. Since 2012, she has served on the editorial board of ISHS's journal, *HUMOR* and the *European Journal of Humour Research*. From 2016 to 2019, Sharon served as an elected Member-at-Large on the ISHS Executive Board. Sharon is committed to sharing the work of academic scholars in humor studies with wider communities and in supporting the highest standards of scholarship.



#### Moira Marsh, Ph.D. (Indiana University, USA)

Moira Marsh is a folklorist and humor scholar with a focus on vernacular humor and humor theory. She is the author of *Practically Joking* (2015) and numerous book chapters and journal articles with an emphasis on the reception of humor in social settings. Moira is a Fellow of the American Folklore Society, former faculty President at Indiana University Bloomington, and former member of the Executive Board of the International Society for Humor Studies. Moira has been the editor of the *Journal of Folklore Research* and the book review editor for the *Journal of American Folklore*, and *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*. She received her M.A. (Honors) from Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, and thanks to a Fulbright travel grant, she earned her PhD and MLS from Indiana University, where she is the subject librarian for Anthropology, Folklore, Sociology, Political Science, and Criminal Justice.

## Candidates for ISHS Board Member-at-Large



### Mostafa Abedinifard, PhD (University of British Columbia, Canada)

Mostafa Abedinifard is an Assistant Professor of Persian Literary Culture and Civilization in the Department of Asian Studies at the University of British Columbia. He is a literary and cultural critic, with a special focus on modern Persian literature and the Iranian culture and cinema, within his broader interests in comparative and world literature. Mostafa's co-edited volume, *Persian Literature as World Literature*, was recently published in Bloomsbury Academic's *Literatures as World Literature* series. Mostafa is currently working on two monographs: *Self-Deprecating Modernity: Humor, Affect, and Nationalism in Iran* and *Fictional Masculinities: Men, Boys, and Manhood in Modern Iranian Film and Fiction*. Besides publications in other areas, his articles on the sociopolitical aspects of humor and ridicule have appeared in several peer-reviewed journals, including *The International Journal of Middle East Studies*; *The British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*; *HUMOR: International Journal of Humor Research*; *Social Semiotics*; and *de genere: Journal of Literary, Postcolonial and Gender Studies*. He also has a book chapter in press titled, "Ridicule in the Qur'an: The Missing Link in Islamic Humor Studies" to appear in *Laughter in the Muslim World: Toward an Understanding of Humour and Islam*. Mostafa currently serves on the Editorial Boards of *HUMOR: International Journal of Humor Research*; *Journal of Men's Studies*; and *Persian Literary Studies Journal*. He has been a member of ISHS for almost a decade and a member of the International Society for Persian Humor (ISPH) since 2016. He is also the Principal Investigator of the ongoing digital humanities project *Middle East Humor: A Digital Docent*.



### Dorota Brzozowska, PhD (Opole University, Poland)

Dorota Brzozowska is a full professor in linguistics at the Institute of English of the Opole University, Poland. Her scholarly research interests comprise research on humour, stylistics, discourse analysis, intercultural communication, and semiotics. She has authored the books, *On Polish and English Jokes. A Linguistic and Cultural Analysis* (2000), *Polish Ethnic Joke. Stereotype and Identity* (2008) and *Chinese Traces in Polish Contemporary Discourses* (2018, in Polish). She co-edited *Humorous Discourse* (2017), *Communicational Styles. Culture's Software* (2015), *Hungarian Humour* (2012), *Polish Humour* (2012), *Poland and Estonia. Creativity and Tradition in Cultural Communication: v. 1 Jokes and their Relations* (2012), v. 2. *Perspectives on National and Regional Identity* (2013), and in Polish, she co-edited *Humor Polski* (2014), *Terms in Linguistics* (2012) and *The World of Humor* (2000). Since 2013, Dr. Brzozowska has been a co-editor of *The European Journal of Humour Research*. She has also organized conferences, published journal articles and reviews, and supervised PhD thesis on different aspects of humour. She has been a regular ISHS conferences participant since 2000 and received the ISHS Emerging Scholar Award in 2005.



### Hsueh Chih Chen, Ph.D. (National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan)

Dr. Hsueh-Chih Chen is a Distinguished Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling and Dean of the College of Education at National Taiwan Normal University. He is also the President of the Taiwan Education Alliance and President of the Asia-Pacific Association for Teacher Education. His work investigates humor from the basic research of cognitive neuroscience to the exploration of social and cultural influences with various techniques including eye-tracking, EEG, and fMRI. Dr. Chen and his team have investigated the neuro-cognitive mechanisms of humor, developed humor training courses for schools and workplaces, used humor to enhance student creativity and learning, and applied techniques of AI to develop a humor chatbot. Additionally, his research team has translated and developed measures to evaluate humor among normal and autistic people with great reliability and validity, including traditional Chinese versions of Humor Style Questionnaire and PhoPhiKat-45.

He has published over 300 articles in national and international journals and in edited books and has received the Outstanding Research Award in Humanities and Social Sciences from the Ministry of Science

and Technology, Taiwan, which recognized his exceptional contributions to academia, including his dedication to humor research. Dr. Chen has rendered excellent service to academic communities through a combination of leadership and public service activities.



### **Ibukun Filani, PhD (Chemnitz University of Technology, Germany)**

Ibukun Filani received his doctoral degree in the Department of English at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. His thesis proposal on *Humour Strategies and Acts in Nigerian Stand-Up Comedy* won him the university's Postgraduate School Research Assistantship Award. Since the completion of his degree in 2016, he has published several articles on stand-up comedy performance in Nigeria. He guest-edited the *European Journal of Humour Research's* special Issue on Nigerian Humour in 2018. Ibukun tackles the question of humor in Nigeria from discourse analysis and pragmatics perspectives. His papers have offered insightful theoretical perspectives on humour in stand-up contexts and analyzed the performance of identities in Nigerian humor. He is a Fellow of the Institute for Advanced Studies at Central European University in Budapest. He teaches English linguistics (Discourse Analysis, Sociolinguistics, Academic Writing and Applied Linguistics) at Augustine University Ilara-Epe in Lagos Nigeria. He is currently an Alexander von Humboldt Research Fellow at the English Department at Chemnitz University of Technology in Germany.



### **Gil Greengross, PhD (Aberystwyth University, Wales, UK)**

Gil Greengross is an evolutionary behavioral scientist in the psychology department at Aberystwyth University in Wales. His interdisciplinary research bridges traditional fields of study such as psychology, anthropology, and biology. His studies focus on evolutionary explanations for humor and laughter, mainly in the context of sexual selection and mating. Gil has also investigated the lives and personalities of stand-up comedians, improv artists, humor writers, cartoonists, and other humor professionals.

Gil has been a member of ISHS since 2001 and has been a familiar face at humor conferences since his first ISHS conference in Forli, Italy, in 2002. In 2007, he received one of three Graduate Student Awards at the ISHS conference in Newport, Rhode Island. He regularly teaches a college level class on the psychology of humor, and also delivers public lectures to school students about humor. Gil serves as a consulting editor for the *HUMOR* journal, and in 2000 served as the guest editor for a special issue of *HUMOR* on Sex Differences in Humor.

Gil works hard to promote public awareness of humor research. He has a blog on the Psychology Today website where he covers humor studies from diverse academic disciplines. He has also contributed to *The Conversation*, and regularly gives interviews on the radio, TV, and podcasts.



### **Nicholas Holm, PhD (Massey University, New Zealand)**

Nicholas Holm is a Senior Lecturer in Media Studies at Massey University, New Zealand. His research explores the political role of popular culture and entertainment media, with a particular focus on humor and comedy. His most recent publications include articles on the politics of fun amidst pandemic lockdowns (*Cultural Studies*, 2021) and the communicative complications of comic irony online (*New Media & Society*, 2021). His most recent book is *Humour as Politics* (Palgrave 2017) and he is currently working on a monograph exploring fun as a social and political category. He is a board member of the Australasian Humour Studies Network (AHSN), a member of the book review editorial team for *HUMOR*, and part of the editorial board of *Comedy Studies*. Nick has been a member of the AHSN since 2014, and hosted the network's conference in February 2021. He first attended a meeting of the International Society for Humor Studies in Montreal, Quebec in 2017 and again in Tallinn, Estonia in 2018.



### **Kerry Mullan, PhD (RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia)**

Associate Professor Kerry Mullan has been a member of the International Society of Humor Studies since 2017 and a member of the Australasian Humour Studies Network (AHSN) since 2015. Since 2019, she has served as Chair of the AHSN Board, and in 2019, she convened the 25th AHSN conference at RMIT University. She regularly presents her humor research at AHSN annual conferences as well as Australian and international linguistics conferences. She has been a member of the Interdisciplinary Network of Humour Research (RIRH) based in France since its inception in 2019 and is currently Chief Investigator on two humor-related research projects based in France. On the “Transnational Coronavirus Humor Project” led by Giselinde Kuipers and Mark Boukes, Kerry leads the Australia/New Zealand team.

As Convenor of Language Studies at RMIT University, Kerry teaches French language and culture and applied linguistics. Her main research interests are cross-cultural communication and humour in French and Australian social interactions. Her co-authored publication, *Issues in conversational humour from a cross-cultural perspective: comparing French and Australian corpora* (2013), proposed a new model for the cross-cultural analysis of conversational humor, which verbal humor scholars have used. Additionally, Kerry has guest co-edited two special journal issues on conversational humor. She has also published research in the areas of intercultural pragmatics, discourse analysis, and language teaching. She greatly enjoys collaborating with colleagues in humor studies across all disciplines and regions and is keen to contribute more directly to the ISHS.



### **Simon Weaver, PhD (Brunel University, United Kingdom)**

Simon Weaver is a Senior Lecturer in Media and Communications in the Department of Social and Political Sciences, and a member of the Centre for Comedy Studies Research, at Brunel University. He has been a member of the International Society for Humor Studies since 2005. Simon’s research focuses on the connections between rhetoric, humour and joking. This has included the rhetorical nature of racial and racist humour and more recently, the relationship between comedy, irony and populism. His most recent book, *The Rhetoric of Brexit Humour: Comedy Populism and the EU Referendum*, published in September 2021, explores the role of humour and comedy in debates around Brexit and populism. His first book, *The Rhetoric of Racist Humour, US, UK and Global Race Joking* (2001), significantly contributed to debates on the role of humour and joking in racisms.

Simon has published 35 articles, book chapters and reviews, and has presented his research internationally in a number of countries. He has discussed his research in a variety of international media, including on BBC radio and television, in the *Times Higher Education*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *The Conversation* and *The Montreal Gazette*. Simon completed his PhD in 2007 in the Department of Sociology, University of Bristol, with a thesis entitled *Humour, Rhetoric and Racism: A Sociological Critique of Racist Humour*. That thesis formed the basis of his first book. His first journal article, “The ‘Other’ Laughs Back: Humour and Resistance in Anti-Racist Comedy,” won the British Sociological Association’s ‘Sage Prize for Innovation and Excellence 2011.



### **Massih Zekavat, PhD (Europa-Universität Flensburg, Germany)**

Massih Zekavat is an Alexander von Humboldt Foundation Fellow at Europa-Universität Flensburg, Germany. He received his Ph.D. in English in 2015. Since 2012, he has been an active member of the humor studies community. Massih is particularly interested in environmental humanities and the sociopolitical impacts of humor and satire. Currently, he is working on a monograph for the Routledge Environmental Humanities Series on the environment impact of satire and humor and on another project with Dr. Eckart von Hirschhausen, German physician and

comedian, and his Gesunde Erde Gesunde Menschen Stiftung (Healthy Planet, Healthy People Foundation). Massih's first book, *Satire, Humor and the Construction of Identities*, was published in 2017 by John Benjamins. He hopes that he can serve the scholarly community and advocate diversity and inclusion by becoming an ISHS Executive Board member.



### **Dick Zijp, PhD Candidate (Utrecht University, Netherlands)**

Dick Zijp is a PhD candidate and lecturer at the Department of Media and Culture Studies at Utrecht University. He has a background in theatre studies, philosophy and cultural studies. His PhD supervisors are Prof. Dr. Giseline Kuipers (Catholic University of Leuven) and Prof. Dr. Maaïke Bleeker (Utrecht University). His research deals with the humor strategies that Dutch comedians use to perform social critique and the way their humor resonates with political ideologies. Next to his academic endeavors, he has worked as a comedy critic for different national newspapers and magazines, and has taught at the Konings Theater Academie in Den Bosch, a university of applied sciences for comedians.

## **ISHS Events**



### **2021 ISHS Meeting of Members**

*Online via Zoom, December 4, 2021, 8:30-10:30 PST (4:30 pm UTC)*

Announced earlier this Fall, the 2021 ISHS Annual Meeting of Members (the Society's Business meeting) will be held online via Zoom on December 4, 2021 from 8:30 to 10:30 am PST (4:30 pm UTC). At the meeting, the Executive Board will provide business reports and announce upcoming events. In advance of the meeting, all current 2021 ISHS members will receive an agenda, prior meeting minutes, and a Zoom link to attend. All current ISHS members are welcome.



### **32nd International Society for Humor Studies Conference**

*University of Bologna, Bertinoro, June 27-July 2, 2022 (Tentative)*

The 32nd ISHS Conference, assuming the relaxing of COVID-19 restrictions, will take place on the Bertinoro campus of the University of Bologna from June 27 to July 2, 2022. You will be able to register and submit paper proposals for the 2022 Conference online at the Conference website at <https://eventi.unibo.it/ishs-2022>. Delegates who paid registration fees in 2020, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and did not request a refund are pre-paid and registered for 2022.



### **2021 ISHS Webinar Series Video Recordings**

*April 9 through June 18, 2021, Video recordings available online*

This past Spring, the Society held its first webinar series with the following six webinars:

*The Contingent Dynamics of Political Humor* (April 9, 2021)

*Is Comedy "Tragedy plus Time"? Roundtable* (April 23, 2021)

*Mutating Discriminatory Representations through Humor* (May 7, 2021)

*Humor and Artificial Intelligence* (May 21, 2021)

*Seriously Funny: Humor that Breaks the Rules* (June 4, 2021)

*Humor as a Personality Characteristic* (June 18, 2021)

The webinar series was a success, paving the way for additional series in the future. In the interim, ISHS members can view the Spring 2021 webinars with the following link and passcode.

Link: <https://1drv.ms/u/s!AhkQa8-GLMi6am7cOFrT46Ddz1E?e=fzbvov>

Passcode: [REDACTED]

Additional ISHS webinar information is available on the ISHS website at <http://www.humorstudies.org>.

## Other Events

### Media and Humor Studies Lab Webinars

*University of Bologna, Online, November 26 and December 3, 2021, 4:00-5:30 pm CET*

The Media and Humor Studies Lab at the University of Bologna is hosting two online Webinars: *Humour in the Public Sphere, Part 1* (November 26) and *Humour in the Public Sphere, Part 2* (December 3). Each webinar begins at 4:30 Central European Time. You can read more and register for the webinars at <https://dit.unibo.it/it/eventi/laboratorio-permanente-di-media-and-humour-studies>. Registration for each webinar ends at 12:00 pm CET on the day of the event. The following earlier MHS Lab Webinars can be viewed online on YouTube:

*The Humorous Rhetoric of Brexit*

<https://youtu.be/Sz3Ht1UBbQo>

*The Dark Side of Humour, or Who Has the Right to Laugh at Gender, Skin Color, Body Shape, and Other Contested Issues—A Humanistic Approach:*

<https://youtu.be/CFlqU3oSZps>

*The Ethics of Punching Up and Down*

*Controversial Cases of Humour as a Philosophical Challenge*

<https://youtu.be/UySQP1UQrhU>

### Twenty-Eighth AHSN Colloquium

*University of Tasmania, Hobart, Australia, February 2-4, 2022*

The 28th Colloquium of the Australasian Humour Studies Network (AHSN) will be held from February 2 to 4, 2022 at the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS), University of Tasmania, Australia. The colloquium convener is Daryl Peebles. The colloquium theme will be *The Politics of Humor and the Humor of Politics*. For more information, contact the colloquium organizers at [ahsnconference@gmail.com](mailto:ahsnconference@gmail.com) or visit the AHSN website at <https://ahsnhumourstudies.org/events>.

### Thirty-Fifth Meeting of the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor

*Orlando, Florida, USA, March 17-22, 2022*

The 35th Conference of the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor will be held March 17 to 22, 2022 at the Rosen Plaza Hotel, Orlando, Florida, USA. The theme of the 35th AATH Conference will be *We're Serious about Humor*. For more information, visit the AATH Conference page at <http://www.aath.org>.

## Call for Contributions

### The Thinking through Memes Project

*From Michael. K. Cundall, Eugenio E. Zaldivar, & Liz Sills, Editors*

Thinking Through Memes is an introductory, interdisciplinary project, suitable for a general audience, bringing together authors from a wide variety of disciplines to discuss and explore issues surrounding the popular culture phenomenon known as memes. The project will include an anthology of newly contributed essays, website and classroom resources and be suitable for undergraduate courses across disciplines.

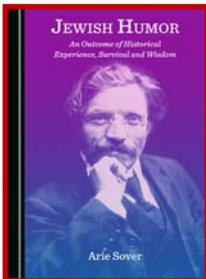
Authors willing to explore issues related to memes broadly conceived, are encouraged to submit. Authors uncertain as to the fit of their ideas are also encouraged to submit. Submissions should come as abstracts; supplementary outlines of chapter content may be included but are not required. Authors selected will receive instructions on submission guidelines and the expected schedule of submission, review, and publication dates.

Here are some general areas to indicate the scope of the text. This is not an exhaustive list: (a) Visual Rhetoric of Memes, (b) Memes as Communication, (c) Are Memes Jokes?, (d) The Metaphysics of Memes, (e) Memes as Art, (f) Memes and Society, (g) Memes and Politics, (h) Teaching with Memes, (i) Memes, Beliefs, and Truth, (j) History of Memes, (k) Memes and their Interpretation. Essays should be proposed and designed for use with undergraduate education in mind. Topics should address foundational or key aspects of memes, their use, and their effects, rather than narrow facets or applications.

NOTE: *All submissions should be original works; reprints will not be accepted.*

The editors of the project are Dr. Michael K. Cundall, Jr. Dr. Eugenio E. Zaldivar, and Dr. Liz Sills. Please send all submissions to [tm@hackettpublishing.com](mailto:tm@hackettpublishing.com) by Tuesday, November 30th.

## Book Review



### **Jewish Humor: An Outcome of Jewish Wisdom, Historical Experience, and Survival**

*Reviewed by Asa Arthur Berger, San Francisco State University*

**Arie Sover (2021). *Jewish humor: An outcome of Jewish wisdom, historical experience, and survival*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Scholars. ISBN13: 978-1-5275-6447-3**

Many books on humor focus so much attention on the linguistic and psychological mechanisms found in works of humor that they don't adequately consider their social, cultural, and political impact or the impact of the societies in which the creators of that humor grew up and lived. A joke or any other humorous text, such as a comic play, a sitcom, or a comic strip always is created by someone or a group of people and is affected by the backgrounds of the creators of these texts and the societies and cultural formation of the humorists. In considering humor, we have to keep in mind several factors such as the psyche of the humorist, the social background of the humorist, the target audience of the humorous text, the society in which the text is created and the medium used by the humorist, such as language, in the case of jokes.

Arie Sover's *Jewish Humor: An Outcome of Jewish Wisdom, Historical Experience, and Survival* is remarkable in that it not only deals with the mechanisms at work in creating humorous text but also with Jewish history and culture, which have played a major role in shaping Jewish humor. In his introduction, Arie Sover—founder and editor of the *Israeli Journal of Humor*—describes his remarkable book as “a complicated mosaic based on three central components of Jewish life: Wisdom, Historical Experience, and Jewish survival. One cannot understand Jewish humor without referring to the various factors which led the Jewish people to create its unusual humor.” His book, then, is about Jewish humor and, at the same time, about Jewish culture and the Jewish people who created this humor. So, the book functions as both an analytic study of humor and a social history of the Jewish people in Europe, the United States, and many other parts of the world as well. And the historical experience of Jews, everywhere, plays an important role in helping us understand the sources of Jewish humor.

The scope of the book is incredible. Sover writes about everything from JAP (Jewish American Princess) jokes to Yiddish humor writers, from Kafka to Phillip Roth. Sover discusses humor in the Old Testament (it is questionable if there's humor in the Bible), in the Talmud, in medieval Europe, in contemporary America, and Israel, among other places. He deals with Jewish literary humor, Jewish pop culture humor, Jewish folklore, Jewish jokes, Jewish comedians, and countless other manifestations of Jewish humor. What is important about this book is that it connects Jewish humor to the Jewish experience and Jewish civilization and thus functions, the way humor often does, as a means of dealing with social and political issues of importance.

In his chapter on the sources of Jewish humor, Sover discusses Talmudic study (2021: 20-21):

The most prominent attribute of Talmudic study culture is creativity and innovation. Talmudic study is based on raising questions and providing creative and innovative answers to Halakhic

questions....In the early fourteenth century, the interpretation of Talmudic issues was performed through the pilpul (quibbling) method called “the division method,” which peaked between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries in Germany and Poland.

It is reasonable to suggest that if you secularize pilpul, and take the same mindset but apply it to a comedic look at society and politics instead of the Talmud, you come up with comedians and humorists of all kinds. That may explain why so many comedians were Jewish in the United States and many other countries, as well.

One feature of this book is that, unlike some books on humor that contain no humorous texts, Sover provides us with many jokes and reprints jokes about rich Jews, rabbis, matchmakers, Hasids, and gentiles, as well as jokes about Jewish comic types such as Schlemiels and Schlimazels. He also has a chapter on “Jewish Jokes Under the Nazi and Soviet Regimes,” as well as Jewish “self-jokes” told during the Holocaust. His book also contains a chapter on American Jewish jokes (Jewish mothers, Jewish American Princesses) and another, in considerable detail, on Israeli satirists and humorists working in all media. Sover also discusses Jewish American humorous literature and covers writers such as Isaac Bashevis Singer, Leo Rosten, Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow, Philip Roth, Gary Shteyngart, Lara Vapnyar, and Jonathan Safran Foer.

In his chapter, “Jewish Humor: An International Brand,” Sover points out that “Jewish humor forms a significant portion of the world's humor. In many countries in the West, the leading humorists have been—and in some of the countries still are—Jews. He cites an interesting statistic, namely that in the mid-70s, eighty percent of the humorists in the United States were Jews.

The conclusion of the book contains three predictions or hypotheses about Jewish humor. The first is that the Jewish traumatic experience will be transferred epigenetically to future generations of Jews. The second is that as long as anti-Semitism remains a factor threatening Jewish existence, Jewish humor will provide a psychological means to cope with, and triumph over it, and finally, that because of their creativity, wisdom, and curiosity, Jewish people will continue “to break new frontiers in science, culture, and humor.”

Sover’s book is a major contribution to the study of humor, Jewish humor, and its relation to Jewish historical experience. It is scholarly, with more than thirty pages of references, and encyclopedic, but it is written in an accessible style and, thanks to all the jokes in the book, highly entertaining.

## Recent Publications

*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 April 2021. If you have a recent publication, let us know. We will include it in a future newsletter.

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