

The Humorous Times

Newsletter of the International Society for Humor Studies

Winter/Spring 2013

Ralph Mueller, Editor

Volume 26, Issue 1

25th Annual ISHS Conference



**College of William and Mary,
Williamsburg, Virginia, July 2-6, 2013**

From Larry Ventis, College of William and Mary

Just a reminder, the College of William and Mary is looking forward enthusiastically to hosting the ISHS Conference this summer, and we hope to have a great turnout. One bit of news has taken us by surprise. The hotel that has been listed as an alternative to dorm accommodations (Hospitality House) has just been purchased by the College, and it will not be available in July, as the College is converting it to dorm space for the fall semester. Consequently, we are exploring other alternatives for those attendees who had opted for a stay at the Hospitality House. This took us by surprise, but we will promptly inform those affected of available alternatives, and it should result in little, if any, inconvenience. Otherwise, you should anticipate an interesting window on life in colonial Virginia, as well as an informative and entertaining conference. If you have not already registered, and would like to, you can still do so at <http://www.cvent.com/d/1cq4d5j>, and we hope to see you in Williamsburg, July 2nd through 6th.

Upcoming Events

Good Laugh, Bad Laugh, Ugly Laugh, My Laugh

**15th Annual Graduate Student Conference
Western University, London, Ontario, March 29–31, 2013**

In May, 1968, a much re-stencilled graffito on the walls of Paris, France, read “L’ennui est contre-révolutionnaire” – “Boredom is counterrevolutionary,” as the English would say. Decades before, Bakhtin showed us that the carnivalesque helps humor flip the accepted on its head and make it spin into the more acceptable. From Aristophanes, Gogol, Rabelais, and Cervantes up to Chaplin, Breytenbach, Cortázar, Hikmet, and Kathy Acker – all of them have done that. So too did the wisecracking superheroes, commedia dell’arte or Ionesco’s characters, stand-up comedians, Woody Allen and the Seinfelds. The laughs they stir are not so innocent, for their puns and pranks, their impressions and caricatures help carry on the uphill battle against the fast regrouping armies of ennui.

This gathering invites you to think about humor as a critique and to develop a critique of humor. We want to crack the ground and consider how laughter has been used to subvert and convert the world throughout the ages. We want to explore how humor varies culturally and historically. As a Gargantuan component of social

In This Issue

25th Annual ISHS Conference	1
Upcoming events	3
15th Annual Graduate Student Conf., Western Univ., CA ? Annual Conf. of the AATH, San Diego ? 13th International Summer School and Symposium on Humor, Germany ? Humor course “Make it funny”, Italy ? SAMLA 2013: Humor in the Digital Age, Atlanta	
Recent Events.....	3
? Australian Humour Studies Network 19th annual colloquium	
Humor in the News	3
CFP Israeli Journ. of Humor Research ? European Journal of Humour Research	
Book Reviews	4
? Lytra: Play Frames and Social Identities	
? Stora-Sandor: An anthology of Jewish humor in world literature	
? Suresha: The Immortal Mullah Nasruddin	
? O’Shannon: What are you laughing at?	
Recent Publications.....	9

Newsletter Staff

Ralph Müller (Switzerland):
ralph.mueller@unifr.ch

Goh Abe (Japan):
gohabe@green.ocn.ne.jp

Guo-Hai Chen (China):
mypeer2002@hotmail.com.

Sean Guillory (USA):
seanguillory1925@gmail.com

Jessica Milner Davis (Australia):
jessica.davis@sydney.edu.au

Next Issue

The next Humorous Times is due May 2013. Please send information, contributions and announcements by May 15.

change, laughter has the power to both unite and exclude. As traditional borders are getting stuck in the united dustbins of the world, is humor becoming more selective? More universal? More shy? Do ‘humorist’ borders or limits of humor still exist? Do they coincide with the frontiers of the languages? Can the phonetics of humor open up the phonological differences between languages? Is there a global humor, or is everyone just making fun of us?

Deadline for submission has passed, for further information please visit the Facebook page (Good Laugh, Bad Laugh, Ugly Laugh, My Laugh) or contact the organizers at mllgradconference2013@gmail.com.

Annual Conference of the AATH

Conference of the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor, San Diego, April 4–7, 2013

The Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor (AATH) is an international community of professionals who incorporate humor into their daily lives. The conference will be held in the Westin Hotel San Diego. Further information can be found on the Internet at <http://www.aath.org/annual-conference>.

13th International Summer School and Symposium on Humour and Laughter

Magedburg, Germany, July 22–27, 2013

Please visit the website of the Summer School and Symposium at <http://humoursummerschool.org/13/> and take a look at the list of lecturers. As in previous years, it includes recognized leaders in the field as well as a recent winner of a graduate student award from the International Society for Humor Studies. The one-week event also features a symposium where participants have an opportunity to present their own research.

The early bird registration has been extended to April 30! For inquiries contact organiser13@humoursummerschool.org.

Humor course “Make it funny!”

Torino, North-West Italy, October 28–November 1, 2013

Public speaking and communicating in effective, funny and desirable manner are arts that can be learned. In fact precise rules, techniques and methodologies exist to achieve these goals. Aim of this training course is therefore to help participants to prepare by themselves public speeches (lectures, meetings, symposia, etc...) by highlighting from the very beginning what sentences, paragraphs and issues need to be emphasized in order to make the speech the most effective possible. Participants will acquire new data, experiences and skills which are significant for their own career, and will have the chance to reflect on their own daily experiences from a European perspective. Through comparison with other systems and practices in fact, they can understand more deeply the significance and relevance of their own work in a more extensive political and educational framework. In order to be effective, communication and public speaking need to be amusing.

This course is interesting to teachers, trainers, managers, educational guides, counselors, inspectors, head teachers, principals, non-teaching administrative and organizing staff and anyone who needs to improve public speaking. The course is taught by Rino Cerritelli, Rita Barbero, Franco Tibaldi, and Stefania Quaino. The course fee is 750 EUR; however, you may be eligible for a European grant that will cover your expenses (deadline for grant applications is 30/04/2013). Please contact the organizers for further information at alba@cesaf.it (subject “MAKE IT FUNNY”).

SAMLA 2013: Humor in the Digital Age

South Atlantic Modern Language Association, Marriott Atlanta, November 8-10, 2013

The American Humor Studies Association seeks papers for a panel, “Humor in the Digital Age,” for the 2013 South Atlantic Modern Language Association (SAMLA) Conference at the Marriott Atlanta from November 8 to 10. This panel will examine how the rise of new media (including social media, content-sharing sites, and blogs) has created new contexts for the production, distribution, and exhibition of humor. We welcome papers on humor and comedy as it is employed in viral videos, blogs or vlogs, web series, webisodes, parodies, participatory culture online, memes, or remixes. Papers may cover individual talents Andy Borowitz of The Borowitz Report, Grace Helbig of DailyGrace, Jenna Marbles, Khyran Mansley, Maddox, Tucker Max; groups Derrick Comedy and the Gregory Brothers (“Auto-Tune the News”); sites College Humor, Funny or Die, The Onion, and Stuff White People Like; social media Facebook, Tumblr, and Twitter; and other “genres” like

mommy blogs, movie trailer recuts, trending hashtags (#firstworldproblems, #drunknatesilver). Prospective panelists could also consider how humorists and comedians/comediennes use websites and social media to connect with their audiences, attract new fans, and disseminate their brand of humor. The overall goal is to examine how digital media technologies either democratize or restrict the creation and distribution of innovative comedy, examining key problems and possibilities posed by new media for the tradition of American humor. Please send inquiries and proposals of 250 words to Pete Kunze atpkunze@lsu.edu by May 1, 2013.

Recent Events

Australian Humour Studies Network 19th annual colloquium

University of Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia, February 7-9, 2013

From Jessica Milner Davis (University of Sydney)

With over fifty participants, the quality of the peer-reviewed multi-disciplinary papers maintained its usual high level. Several overseas presenters attended, two from New Zealand, two from USA and one each from Malaysia, Estonia and Poland. Of the 37 papers, 13 came from research students from 10 universities in Australia and Asia. There were 3 film-screenings based on research projects: a study of American road-comics, humour interventions in aged care, and a new Australian Indigenous sit-com for international audiences. Co-Convenors were Conjoint Prof. Michael Ewans FAHA and Mr Michael Meany, both from University of Newcastle, which was a generous host. Keynotes and invited speakers included: A/Prof Susan Seizer, Indiana University; Mr Mahmud Farjami, Sains Universiti Malaysia (Graduate Student Awardee, 2012 ISHS); Dr Phillip McIntyre, University of Newcastle; Prof. Wladyslaw Chlopicki, Jagellonian University, Krakow; Dr Liisi Laineste, Estonian Literary Museum, Tartu; and Em. Prof. Ken Dutton, University of Newcastle.

The Colloquium received considerable media coverage, both local and national, and one long series of radio interviews is at: <http://www.sbs.com.au/podcasts/Podcasts/radionews/episode/254678/An-international-look-at-humour>.

The 20th Colloquium will be hosted by Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, 14–15 February 2014. The Call for papers will be announced on the AHSN website in April: <http://sydney.edu.au/humourstudies>.

Humor in the News

Israeli Journal of Humor Research (ISJHR). An International Journal

From Arie Sover (Ashkelon Academic College)

I am happy to inform you that the second issue of the Israeli Journal of Humor Research is now available online. We thank the following authors for their contributions to this issue: Ruth Avidar, Christie Davies, Jeffrey Davis, Peter Desberg, Yaniv Goldberg, Mel Gordon, Alleen Nilsen, Don Nilsen, John Parkin, and Anat Zeidman. To enter the journal site please visit the Internet at <http://www.israeli-humor-studies.org/122789/The-International-Journal-ISJHR>.

The next issue will be published during the first half year of 2013. You are cordially invited to submit your paper to the ISJHR. We welcome any idea you may have that will contribute to the scholarly goals of the Journal as well as in forwarding our understanding of this most valuable human quality. We look forward to all contributions.

First issue of The European Journal of Humour Research

The first issue of *The European Journal of Humour Research* has appeared and can be read on the Internet at <http://www.europeanjournalofhumour.org/index.php/ejhr> (see also our “Recent publications” section).



For more ISHS news, visit us on the web at www.humorstudies.org.

Play Frames and Social Identities

Vally Lytra (2007): Play Frames and Social Identities: Contact Encounters in a Greek Primary School. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company. 300pp.

Hardbound: ISBN #978 90 272 5407 8; EUR 105.00; USD 158.00

E-book: ISBN #978 90 272 9178 3; EUR 105.00; USD 158.00

From Maren Rawlings (Swinburne University of Technology, Australia)

This book is an ethnographic study of discourse among a school population of minority Turkish speaking people of Roma heritage settled in northern Greece in the late seventies of the last century together with majority Greek speaking people, all living in Gazi, Greece. The author produced a very sound and closely integrated theoretical base for her analysis, but the text is not particularly easy to access. I have tried to summarize her analysis of data.

Within the field of multicultural education, the documentation of new initiatives is very valuable, particularly to those who train teachers, or to teachers and administrators of schools in cross-cultural contexts. Lytra's observations occurred as a primary school moved from a Greek speaking curriculum to an "intercultural school" with an in-service teacher training program and an extended school program (for students to do extra work to improve their achievement).

The benefit of this book to those who are interested in humor research, however, is the generally joyous extracts of communication between the bi-lingual Greek and Turkish children as they negotiate the extent of each others' cultural references. There are canned jokes, explosions of context-bound wit and wonderful explorations of nonsense, rhyme and particularly rhythm in the children's playful talk. These extracts are reproduced in the original Greek or Turkish, together with English translations rendered by the author.

Stemming from a social constructivist perspective, the definition of identity adopted by the author is one that sees identity articulated and constructed in talk, drawing on the performance theory of Bauman (1986) and Goffman's (1961) conceptions of social framing. The peer group forms a community of practice (Wenger, 2002) with its own shared linguistic and semiotic resources which link to the articulation of the individual's discourse identity.

The researcher is both Turkish and Greek speaking and a majority Greek. She was mainly addressed in Greek by the children after they established her bona fides in Turkish. She dressed casually and tried to keep up with the popular media experienced by the children, joining in the children's games. The students knew her as a volunteer tutor and as a teacher in their school as well as a researcher. Her guiding assumption was that "children and teachers would be far too involved in their daily routines and activities to make significant alternations [sic] for my sake or for the sake of the tape-recorder" (p.67).

In fact the children used the tape-recording for play. They removed the remote microphone from its stand to sing into it or play a variation of a truth-or-dare game. They directed "teasing jibes and snappy retorts" (p.68) into their personal clip microphones. They sang snippets of love songs for the researcher and sought out friends in the play-ground to say something into the microphone. The children were observed to have a rich repertoire of playful activities and routines. The transcription system used in recording the data under analysis drew on Tannen (1984) and Norrick (1993). All excerpts are faithful to the children's idioms and colloquial speech without corrections.

Life at school was typically controlled by the teachers who distributed opportunities to speak, inhibiting "self-selected first starters" (p.75) and initiated changes in topics. This regime however was not all pervasive during teacher directed instruction and playful talk during this time emerged 3 to 4 times. Playful talk included "teasing, joking, verbal play, music making and chanting" (p.76). The data identifies 229 episodes of playful talk (with 134 occurring during teacher led, whole class instruction). Chapter 3 recorded twenty-three excerpts of conversation.

The author's field notes record the surprising immersion of the students in the culture of Brazilian soap operas dubbed into Greek and their devotion to a list of Greek pop singers. "Acting out" scenes (from the soaps) was a popular form of play among eight year old girls. Boys mimicked sexual innuendos from popular Greek TV comedies. Girls discussed male pop idols with the researcher. The author concluded that majority

and minority children could show off their knowledge in these exchanges. Over the two years of the study, this common knowledge had to be continually updated.

Gender differences in peer relevant knowledge were noticed. Boys favored football chants in Greek and Turkish, as well as rap and rock songs, whereas girls favored love songs. Turkish girls also sang Turkish “arabesk” songs, learned from satellite TV or from family celebrations such as weddings. Minority children had exclusivity in their peer referenced talk about Turkish TV. Greek boys were more willing to try to enter such conversations, asking questions of clarification or using Turkish sporting chants, than were Greek girls.

The pervading attitude of the classroom was to discourage all references to popular media. When students were asked what “adopted” meant, a correct example from the Brazilian soaps was ignored and the lesson was resumed. The author concluded that teachers tried to segregate classroom transmission of information from media culture. All minority children (but one) claimed to have learned to read and write Turkish at home or from TV and they saw instruction in Turkish at school as either confusing to their acquisition of Greek or as unnecessary. When tested some of these children did not even know the Turkish alphabet. They were ambivalent about the value of Standard (“polite”) Turkish to their needs, although they knew that they had to speak it in Turkey or with relatives or friends from Turkey. Speaking Standard Turkish could earn them the epithet of “show-off”.

The children exploited exaggeration, hyperbole and used new words and laughter “to build their jokes” (p.102). Thirty-nine of the 44 jokes identified in the corpus were during classroom instruction and only five were observed during recreation periods. Two girls teasingly assisted a boy with his grammar homework by tidying his folder and threatening to write answers on the board for him to copy (Excerpt 3.16). “Self-denigrating” humor was evident, “if we were competing, I would have won by two thousand mistakes” (Excerpt 3.18).

Puns and homophones were popular, particularly when incorporated with music snatches at the remote microphone. Thirteen episodes of verbal play were identified, of which 10 occurred during instruction. Music making reflected the students’ shared media interests outside school, usually choruses or opening lines. Others clapped, tapped or joined in making exaggerated gestures. Nonsense and ribald phrases were tried out in song. Most of these musical episodes (20 out of 29) took place outside instruction. Girls in particular, engaged in formal playacting of the variety shows that were on the television. Rival chants and songs were performed simultaneously.

Nicknames consisted of word plays on the children’s family or given names (one Greek surname, for instance, homophonically resembled the Turkish for “necklace”). Four boys were given nicknames that were associated with feminine identities, although their use was restricted and curiously there were no other references to the children’s sexuality in their talk. Nicknames were used for seeking one another’s attention across the classroom.

In the recreational contexts of school breaks, teasing among the 11 participants was the main focus of analysis. Of 127 episodes of teasing, 62 occurred during break time or lunch time and 63 during instruction (the context of the other two is not recorded). The author remarked that the teasing she observed appeared to be ritualized from frequent practice. This was reflected in the excerpts chosen for analysis, 7 of which were repeated from the previous chapter, some with a few extended remarks. The responses to teases included playful retaliations and playing along, keeping silent, responding seriously (often via frame shifts) and appeal to an adult to intervene. The methods of creating teases included mock challenges, mimicry, hyperbole, prosody, signalling through laughing or clapping, code and style switches, and the use of “untranslatable” particles.

Within the long-standing friendship group under study, teasing was found to be relatively “safe”, as Norrick (1993) deemed it, “customary joking relationships” among peers as habitual activity. Teasing appeared to occur at “liminal” moments when the children were between roles (e.g., beginning break, or settling in class after breaks).

During instruction periods teachers tended to resist child initiated frame shifts to play, but playful talk was tolerated to alleviate stress or boredom, creating “secondary adjustments” (Goffman, 1961) where individuals stand apart from their designated roles. The students could challenge the teacher within the classroom by negotiating frame shifts from instruction to play. Teachers had redress to turn-taking, topic and frame or they could ignore play attempts and persist. The author observed play frames to “trial off” [sic] when these methods were applied and “children and teachers appeared to be engaged in opposing goals in their local struggle” (p.237). Teachers used front stage play to enhance their personal relations with the students.

During English classes children's "propensity for play increased exponentially" (p. 238). The children were permitted to mimic the teacher and she teased them about their mistakes (in Greek). Playful talk permitted experimentation without loss of face. Turkish children did not attend fee-paying out of school English lessons, so masking ignorance with play was a priority for them. One student was able to compare metalinguistic features of Turkish using the blackboard in class. When this student initiated a conversation in Turkish in the teachers' lounge, she was ignored (p.224). When similarities between the Greek and Turkish pronunciation of the word "tent" were brought to the attention of the teacher by Turkish students, she ignored the contribution and continued with Greek (p.245), confessing another time to an inadequate knowledge of Turkish. Thus students' attempts to raise the profile of Turkish in the intercultural school were illicitly suppressed.

Lytra's focus is on the conversational contact encounters of her participant students and her account is extremely thorough. However, reading chapters 4, 5 and 6 of her closely argued work is hampered by very unsystematic naming of excerpts and by repeating examples previously used. Very detailed and somewhat repetitive analysis of the multiple points of view contributes to this feeling of déjà vu. More illustrations from the 50 hour corpus would increase both the saliency of her points and the appreciation of how the children used humor and play to make and maintain social connections. Nevertheless, this careful documentation and analysis of this "intercultural" initiative in Greek education has considerable value to educators internationally. There are also some lovely episodes that may further support current theoretically explorations of humor in children.

References

- Bauman, R. 1986 *Story, Performance and Event: Contextual Studies of Oral Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Goffman, E. 1961 *Encounters. Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction*. Indianapolis: The Bobs-Merrill Company.
Norrick, N. R. 1993 *Conversational Joking. Humor in Everyday Talk*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Tannen, D. 1984 *Conversational Style: Analyzing Talk among Friends*. Norwood, N.J: Albex.
Wenger, E. R., McDermott, et al. 2002. *Cultivating Communities of Practice: a Guide to Managing Knowledge*. Boston, Mass: Harvard Business School Press.

Chosen laughter. An anthology of Jewish humor in world literature

Judith Stora-Sandor (2012): Le rire élu. Anthologie de l'humour juif dans la littérature mondiale (Chosen laughter. An anthology of Jewish humour in world literature). Paris: Gallimard. 421pp. 23€.

Commentary and summary by the author

Judith Stora-Sandor (University of Paris 8, and President CORHUM)

Compilations of Jewish stories appear regularly without their evident worldwide range ever being investigated, nor its precious jewels translated into French. This novel anthology of Jewish humor presents in French for the first time literary texts drawn from works of different periods and the widest geographical spectrum. Such an edition will inevitably reflect its compiler's taste. Indeed the collection depends entirely on my own sense of humor. The publisher meanwhile must rely on those two qualities: that is the nature of this kind of a book and one can but hope that readers will accept the choices made.

Such a pre-emptive justification is not however very satisfying and the selection criteria might in fact be explained more fully. One question that spontaneously arises is whether an author must be Jewish in order to contribute to Jewish humor. Equally, one may wonder if the humor of a Jewish author is always Jewish humor. There are no straight and simple answers to these questions.

They have moreover been raised and widely discussed in the context of Jewish literature since the 19th century and the time of their emancipation, when Jews in different periods and areas began to write in the language of their receiving countries. How does this material composed in languages other than the Jewish tongues (Hebrew and Yiddish) pertain to Jewish literature? Such problems are particularly apparent when the subjects treated are not explicitly Jewish, as the novels of Kafka illustrate perfectly. Though in his non-literary writings and correspondence he asserted his Jewishness, the Jewish issue never figured openly in his literary works. Although opinions still differ to this day, I have deliberately chosen to include one of his texts. Other significant examples concern American Jewish writers. Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud and Philip Roth have protested vigorously against critics who sought to characterize their works as Jewish literature and themselves as Jewish writers. They did not wish to be ghettoized, but thought of as American writers, or as writers pure and simple. I do not know if they demonstrated the same reservation when their humor was described as Jewish.

I regretfully declare that I can offer no simple and clear definition of Jewish humor. I have dedicated fifteen years to the study of this topic (which was also my doctoral subject). Delving into the results of those long researches, I have – in the introduction to the five sections of the book as in the commentaries accompanying the texts – presented keys to an understanding of the origin of Jewish humor, its various forms and its main characteristics. However detailed, no analysis of this phenomenon can claim to be exhaustive – a point no less true of humor in general. From Plato to the present day, the best minds have endeavored to define humor; but with every period new thinkers endlessly recommence the work completed by their predecessors, judged to be incomplete, outdated, even inaccurate.

Jewish literature has a long history if one considers the Bible and its exegesis – the Talmud – to be literary works. But modern Jewish literature commenced in the 19th century with the first Yiddish compositions in the shtetls of Eastern Europe, while in other European states, Jewish writers used the language of their adopting countries. It would be even harder, if not impossible, to date the origins of Jewish humor. Jews have always enjoyed telling stories, as folklore reveals -- but who can say when exactly these tales became Jewish? What one can state with certainty is that Jewish humor is present in Jewish literary works from their first appearance, as revealed by the texts chosen for this anthology which follow the worldwide migrations of the Jewish diaspora. Israel is the final stage of these wanderings, at least for some, and it forms the natural closure to this work. There is indeed an Israeli diaspora, spread among different countries, but I shall bequeath to others the task of collecting its humorous productions – they undoubtedly exist, given that humor seems consubstantial with being a Jew.

From among the astonishing diversity of texts, periods, languages and countries, there emerges one common factor at least: the desire of these authors to establish that well-known “distance” vis-à-vis the most tragic events and situations in order to soften them with tones of humor. Not only have anti-Semitism, pogroms and persecution failed to arrest the endless flow of these works, but those same events have often served precisely as a stimulus to humor. And post-Auschwitz laughter proves that even the greatest disaster in Jewish history could not destroy its vigor.

Although most of the works quoted here address serious subjects while challenging them with humorous treatment, some are not concerned with dreadful events. They take up everyday concerns, the problems raised by this or that situation, often human weaknesses shared by all. In these cases, a light touch is found not to be appropriate. The problems are described in the most serious tones, evoking the language of Old Testament prophecy and they are raised to tragic dimensions, exemplifying the basic rules of comic writing taken to extremes.

Finally, although this panorama of Jewish humor is not limited to comic literature, apart from the writings of a few professional humorists, the texts are all taken from novels or short stories by Jewish authors or authors of Jewish origin. Thus, if Jewish stories belong to the common heritage of Jewry, humor seems to be an essential literary ingredient.

The Uncommon Sense of the Immortal Mullah Nasruddin

Ron J. Suresha (ed.) (2011): The Uncommon Sense of the Immortal Mullah Nasruddin: Stories, Jests, and Donkey Tales of the Beloved Persian Folk Hero, collected and retold by Ron J. Suresha, with a preface by Ann Shapiro (Executive Director, Connecticut Storytelling Centre). Maple Shade NJ: Lethe Press. 231 pp.

ISBN #978-1590211755; USD 18.00

From Yangbin Chen (La Trobe University, Australia)

This is not a scholarly study but rather a valuable source-book of little-known material from a not very well-known culture. And yet my curiosity in reviewing this book was prompted by more than a shared sense of humor; I actually was intrigued by my long-standing research interest in one of China's ethnic minorities in the northwest: the Uyghur. From childhood, like millions of Chinese Han people, I have known the numerous funny stories about a Uyghur man Effendi (A Fan Ti in Chinese Pinyin pronunciation) from cartoons, movies and books. Later on, I realized that this image of Effendi transcends any single ethnic group and country. It is part of a wide range of representations based on a character of the same origin that sweeps from Afghanistan to India, Iran, Turkey and even to Albania, Bulgaria and Italy in Europe. To this end, Suresha's collection (or “recreation” to some extent) of Nasruddin really underlines the theme reflected in the book's title: “immortal”

and “beloved”, as does the excerpt highlighted by Suresha, saying of Nasruddin, “Wherever you go or stay, whatever you do or say, whether it be night or day, people will only laugh and laugh at you” (p. 11). Regardless whether Effendi or Nasruddin or other names, regardless of the various claims making him out to be Persian, Turkish, Uyghur, etc., all are the same “imaged” folk Muslim ethnic identity in the western and Central Asia and Southeast Europe.

I was amused by the vivid manifestation of Nasruddin’s daily life as a common wise fool. The Chinese versions of Effendi I have read in collections and watched in productions over a long time invariably presented him as part of the “class struggle”: Effendi represents the ordinary peasant class (the oppressed) and the landlords and kings represent the ruling feudal class (oppressor). In a typical scenario, landlords or kings are teased and punished by the mighty and wise Effendi, all realized in a satirical and humorous mood.

In contrast, Suresha’s collection features both Nasruddin’s distinctive wisdom and his common foolishness. Presenting one side of his character, Nasruddin is uncommon in his wise and non-violent fight with wicked opponents such as businessmen and landlords; whereas, revealing his other side, Suresha shows that Nasruddin is also common in his everyday family life: “Today most people encounter his tales in the context of their daily lives” (p. 12). His stupidity can be seen in his relationships with his father, wife, children, neighbors and even his beloved donkey. Nasruddin appears as an innocent and even childish person. Most of our laughter is directed at Nasruddin the pathetic man, but he is still the winner, as it is natural to sympathize with his self-mockery. It is part of human nature for ordinary people to value a sense of humor to offset the monotony of daily life. How admirable is Nasruddin’s immortal humor!

This collection thoughtfully combines different types of humorous stories, long stories lasting for several pages (with complicated scenarios and vivid description), short jests of a single sentence, and tales that may be only a couple of paragraphs. The shortest one consists of eight words, “To buy the manger, Nasruddin sold the mule” (p. 86), whereas the longest one extends for nearly five pages: “Once while Nasruddin was chopping firewood in the forest near Aksehir, he climbed up a mulberry tree [...]” (pp. 212–216). Here Nasruddin encounters a variety of characters, from the village physician Berrak, to his donkey Karakacan, a camel and a dog, his friends Mali, Jafar and Faik, a band of unkempt ceramics salesmen, and his wife Fatima. The story tells of Nasruddin’s hilarious experiences at a funeral and in the graveyard. Regardless of their different lengths, the stories invariably convey Nasruddin’s world-weary wisdom, and echo the book’s theme of “uncommon sense”. How ridiculous it is for Nasruddin to be selling his mule in order to buy the manger! Without a mule, what is the point of owning a manger? How absurd it is for Nasruddin not to realize that by chopping off the branch he was sitting on, he would fall out of the mulberry tree! How mad he is in believing Berrak’s ravings that, “I predict that you shall die when... your pathetic donkey is carrying you and brays four times”! In this sophisticatedly plotted story, Nasruddin displays again his uncommon sense of his own childlike foolishness. I share the view that “some people say that, whilst uttering what seemed madness, he was, in reality, divinely inspired, and that it was not madness but wisdom that he uttered” (*The Turkish Jester, or, The Pleasantries of Cogia Nasr Eddin Effendi* (orig. ed., trans. George Borrow, 1884; General Books, 2010).

The book would make an even more vivid impression if the author had added some pictures, such as Nasruddin at different ages, or Nasruddin from his different (claimed) origins, as these would enhance his distinctiveness and his immortality. Titles for each section would also help give the reader a clear view of Nasruddin’s life history. Nevertheless, Suresha’s efforts in recreating such a “serious” collection of humorous stories are to be appreciated.

What are you laughing at?

Dan O’Shannon (2012): What Are You Laughing At? A Comprehensive Guide to the Comedic Event: New York, NY.: Continuum International Publishing Group. 298pp. ISBN 978 1-4411-6293-9; \$ 24.95

From Peter Derks (College of William & Mary)

Experts usually have a hard time explaining how they work. O’Shannon is certainly an expert at creating comedy. He has written and produced sitcoms including *Cheers*, *Frasier*, and *Modern Family*. Never the less this description of the mechanisms of comedy is clear and remarkably detailed. He admits that he does not consciously follow his own instructions and that this is not a “how to” book. Consequently he did receive academic help in the conscious development of the model. He gives generous and enthusiastic praise to Jack

Powers and Kim Neuendorf, a member of ISHS, for continued curiosity, encouragement and advice. The result is a flow chart, complete with triangles, squares and connecting lines. The whole thing is as complete a description of humor and comedy as will be found anywhere. The final result deserves the attention of any theorist, researcher, or casually curious observer, defined by O'Sullivan as "the kid in the back of the room."

Recent Publications

New Books on Humor

Laineste, Liisi / Dorota Brzozowska / Wladyslaw Chlopicki (eds) (2012). *Estonia and Poland. Creativity and tradition in cultural communication*, Vol 1, Jokes and their relations. Tartu: ELM Scholarly Press. (ISBN 978-9949-490-20-2, Vol.1 printed version; ISBN 978-9949-490-22-6, Vol. 1 web version)

This book deals with the creativity and tradition of cultural phenomena in the rapidly transforming post-socialist societies. Research material for Volume 1: *Jokes and their relations* includes primarily humor, but also proverbs and online aggressiveness. The results throw light on the similarities and differences in the ways cultural narratives have changed in the past decades and identity issues in the former Eastern Bloc are reflected in everyday texts, either online, on television, or in face-to-face communication.

Mansfield, Elizabeth C. / Kelly Malone (eds) (2013). *Seeing Satire in the Eighteenth Century*. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation. (ISBN 978-0-7294-1063-2).

The Enlightenment sustained a complex, though now practically invisible, culture of visual humor. Contributors to this book recapture the unique energy of comic images in the works of key artists and authors of the period, and demonstrate how visual satire extended to all areas of society and culture across Europe and North America.

New Articles on Humor

The Humorous Times mentions articles which appeared in our journal or which have been published by researchers who have been active within the ISHS. Please inform us about your publications!

Avidar, Ruth: How a Politician can Successfully Use Self Humor and Apply Public Relations Principles Online: An Israeli Case Study. In: *Israeli Journal of Humor Research* 1:2 (2012).

Baran, A.: Visual humour on the Internet. In: Laineste, Liisi / Dorota Brzozowska / Wladyslaw Chlopicki (eds) (see above).

Baumgartner, Jody: No laughing matter? Young adults and the "spillover effect" of candidate-centered political humor. In: *HUMOR* 26:1 (2013).

Brzozowska, Dorota: Family in Polish jokes. In: Laineste, Liisi / Dorota Brzozowska / Wladyslaw Chlopicki (eds) (see above).

Brzozowska, Dorota: Three characters in Polish jokes. In: Laineste, Liisi / Dorota Brzozowska / Wladyslaw Chlopicki (eds) (see above)

Burgers, Christian / Margot van Mulken / Peter Jan Schellens: The use of co-textual irony markers in written discourse. In: *HUMOR* 26:1 (2013).

Burnard, Trevor: "A compound mongrel mixture": racially coded humor, satire, and the denigration of white Creoles in the British Empire 1784–1834. In: Elizabeth C. Mansfield / Kelly Malone (see above).

Chlopicki, W.: Stand-up tragedy in Poland? In: Laineste, Liisi / Dorota Brzozowska / Wladyslaw Chlopicki (eds) (see above).

Chrisman-Campbell, Kimberly: 'He is not dressed without a muff': muffs, masculinity, and la mode in English satire. In: Elizabeth C. Mansfield / Kelly Malone (see above).

Davies, Christie: The English Mother-in-Law Joke and Its Missing Relatives. In: *Israeli Journal of Humor Research* 1:2 (2012).

Davis, Jeffrey / Peter Desberg: Using the Process-Based Interview to Investigate Comedy Writing. In: *Israeli Journal of Humor Research* 1:2 (2012).

Dozois, David J.A. / Rod A. Martin / Breanne Faulkner: Early maladaptive schemas, styles of humor and aggression. In: *HUMOR* 26:1 (2013).

Gérin, Annie: A second look at laughter: Humor in the visual arts. In: *HUMOR* 26:1 (2013).

Goldberg, Yaniv: Ephraim Kishons's "lefi Ratzon" - "As much as You Like": the Metamorphosis of a Skit across Languages and Cultures. In: *Israeli Journal of Humor Research* 1:2 (2012).

Gordon, Mel: Nazi "proof" That Jews Possessed the Worst Humor in the World. In: *Israeli Journal of Humor Research* 1:2 (2012).

Korotkov, Dave / Lydia Amir / Arie Sover: Editorial. In: *Israeli Journal of Humor Research* 1:2 (2012).

- Krikmann, A.: Estonian three nation jokes (1964–2012). In: Laineste, Liisi / Dorota Brzozowska / Wladyslaw Chlopicki (eds) (see above).
- Laineste, L.: Verbal expressions of aggressiveness on the Estonian Internet. In: Laineste, Liisi / Dorota Brzozowska / Wladyslaw Chlopicki (eds) (see above).
- Laineste, Liisi: Stand-up in Estonia: From Soviet estrada to Comedy Estonia. In: Laineste, Liisi / Dorota Brzozowska / Wladyslaw Chlopicki (eds) (see above).
- Laineste, Liisi: Women in Estonian jokes. In: Laineste, Liisi / Dorota Brzozowska / Wladyslaw Chlopicki (eds) (see above).
- Lee Hyde, Melissa: Needling: embroidery and satire in the hands of Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin. In: Elizabeth C. Mansfield / Kelly Malone (see above).
- Levitt, Marcus C.: “Women’s wiles” in Mikhail Chulkov’s *The Comely cook*. In: Elizabeth C. Mansfield / Kelly Malone (see above).
- Lõhmus, M.: Political correctness and political humour in Soviet Estonia and beyond. In: Laineste, Liisi / Dorota Brzozowska / Wladyslaw Chlopicki (eds) (see above).
- Malinowsky, Alfred J.: Characteristics of Job Burnout and Humor among Psychotherapists. In: *HUMOR* 26:1 (2013).
- Mannheimer, Katherine: Anatomizing print’s perils: Augustan satire’s textual bodies. In: Elizabeth C. Mansfield / Kelly Malone (see above).
- Mansfield, Elizabeth C. / Kelly Malone, Introduction: seeing satire in the Age of Reason. In: Elizabeth C. Mansfield / Kelly Malone (see above).
- Minuk, Steven: Swift’s satire of vision. In: Elizabeth C. Mansfield / Kelly Malone (see above).
- Nilsen, L.F. Don & Alleen Pace: The Significance of Irony as Master trope. In: *Israeli Journal of Humor Research* 1:2 (2012).
- Nwokah, Evangeline E. / Sandra E. Burnette / Kelly N. Graves: Joke telling, humor creation, and humor recall in children with and without hearing loss. In: *HUMOR* 26:1 (2013).
- Özdogru, Asil Ali / Robert F. McMorris: Humorous cartoons in college textbooks: Student perceptions and learning. In: *HUMOR* 26:1 (2013).
- Parkin, John: Comic Readings of Dictionnaire des idées reçues. In: *Israeli Journal of Humor Research* 1:2 (2012).
- Piekot, T.: Pictorial representation of idioms in Internet humour. In: Laineste, Liisi / Dorota Brzozowska / Wladyslaw Chlopicki (eds) (see above).
- Plax, Julie-Anne: Watteau’s witticisms: visual humor & sociability. In: E. C. Mansfield / K. Malone (see above).
- Poprawa, M.: Polish political humour. An outline of the phenomenon. In: Laineste, Liisi / Dorota Brzozowska / Wladyslaw Chlopicki (eds) (see above).
- Rebane, M.: Some aspects of telling political jokes in Soviet Estonia. In: Laineste, Liisi / Dorota Brzozowska / Wladyslaw Chlopicki (eds) (see above).
- Richardson, Emily : “Tu n’as pas tout vü !”: seeing satire in the Saint-Aubin *Livre de caricatures*. In: Elizabeth C. Mansfield / Kelly Malone (see above).
- Rosenberg, Eric: The impossibility of painting: the satiric inevitability of John Singleton Copley’s *Boy with a squirrel*. In: Elizabeth C. Mansfield / Kelly Malone (see above).
- Schwartz, Emmanuel: Satire unmasked by reading. In: Elizabeth C. Mansfield / Kelly Malone (see above).
- Strzadala, G.: Censorship in the People’s Republic of Poland. In: Laineste, Liisi / Dorota Brzozowska / Wladyslaw Chlopicki (eds) (see above).
- Szpila, G.: Regulating the reality? Proverbs in Polish graffiti. In: Laineste, Liisi / Dorota Brzozowska / Wladyslaw Chlopicki (eds) (see above).
- Tereszkiewicz, A.: Do Poles flame? Aggressiveness on Polish discussion groups and social networking sites. In: Laineste, Liisi / Dorota Brzozowska / Wladyslaw Chlopicki (eds) (see above).
- Veale, Tony: Humorous similes. In: *HUMOR* 26:1 (2013).
- Voolaid, P.: In graffiti veritas: A paremic glance at graffiti in Tartu. In: Laineste, Liisi / Dorota Brzozowska / Wladyslaw Chlopicki (eds) (see above).
- Wolf, Reva: Seeing satire in the peepshow. In: Elizabeth C. Mansfield / Kelly Malone (see above).
- Yonan, Michael: Messerschmidt, the Hogarth of sculpture. In: E. C. Mansfield / K. Malone (see above).
- Popa, Diana, Elena / Chlopicki, Wladyslaw / Brzozowska, Dorota: Editorial. In: *The European Journal of Humour Research* 1:1 (2013).
- Amir, Lydia B.: Philosophy’s Attitude towards the Comic – A Reevaluation In: *The European Journal of Humour Research* 1:1 (2013).
- Dynel, Marta: Humorous Phenomena in Dramatic Discourse. In: *The European Journal of Humour Research* 1:1 (2013).

- Hadley Williams, Janet Elizabeth: Humorous Poetry in Late Medieval Scots and Latin (c. 1450–1550): An Overview. In: *The European Journal of Humour Research* 1:1 (2013).
- Manteli, Vicky: Translating Aristophanes' humour for the Modern Greek stage: The Acharnians at the National Theatre of Greece (1961–2005) and the State Theatre of Northern Greece (1991–2010). In: *The European Journal of Humour Research* 1:1 (2013).
- Proyer, René T.: The Well-Being of Playful Adults: Adult Playfulness, Subjective Well-Being, Physical Well-Being, and the Pursuit of Enjoyable Activities. In: *The European Journal of Humour Research* 1:1 (2013).
- Ruch, Willibald / Jennifer Hofmann / Tracey Platt: Investigating Facial Features of Four Types of Laughter in Historic Illustrations. In: *The European Journal of Humour Research* 1:1 (2013).