

The Humorous Times

Newsletter of the International Society for Humor Studies

Summer 2019

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Association News

31st International Society for Humor Studies Conference

University of Texas at Austin
June 24 to 28, 2019

From Christian Hempelmann
2019 ISHS Conference Convener

The 31st annual conference of the International Society for Humor Studies took place from June 25 to 29 at the University of Texas at Austin. The conference was co-organized by Dale Koike (UT Austin), Elisa Gironzetti (University of Maryland), and Salvatore Attardo and Christian Hempelmann (Texas A&M University-Commerce). The organizers received additional support from Betsy Brown (Texas Language Center) and student helpers from Texas A&M-Commerce and UT Austin. More than 140 humor researchers from 31 countries were convened for 5 days (only the first of which had scorching heat, the others were merely sweltering). Two plenaries bookended breakout and other sessions each day. Plenary speakers, in alphabetical order, were Nancy Bell, Herbert Colston, Tom Ford, Michael Haugh, Sharon Lockyer, Beatrice Priego-Valverde, Janetta Rebold Benton, Joel Sherzer, Rachel Shively, Villy Tsakona, and Robert West. The conference also had workshops, a poster session, and special panels on the Texan Massacre (Władysław Chłopicki), the Double Dactyl (John DuVal), and Humor and Artificial Intelligence (Kiki Hempelmann, Tristan Miller, Max Petrenko, Julia Rayz), as well as three special sessions by the International Association for the Philosophy of Humor (Lydia Amir). ISHS student awards were announced and presented in a special plenary session. This year's winners were Melisa Redondo and Mitch Ingram for the Graduate Student Awards, Anastasiya Fiadotava for the Don and Alleen Nilsen Young Scholars Award, and Paul Butterfield for the Christie Davies Award. The social program included welcoming drinks at



Student Award Recipients: Mitch Ingram, Anastasiya Fiadotava, Melisa Redondo, and Paul Butterfield with ISHS President, Władysław Chłopicki

the conference venue, an evening at nearby Scholz Beer Garden, where the traditional joke telling contest was won by Giacinto Palmieri, and a banquet at UT Austin's conference center on the last night. This banquet saw the presentation of the ISHS Lifetime Award to Elliott Oring, and Salvatore Attardo announced a festschrift of special essays for Victor Raskin. In addition to the printed program, the conference had all program items available in a convenient, immediately updated conference app, which was set up by Elisa Gironzetti and accessible to all attendees.

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Next Issue

The next *Humorous Times* is due in November 2019. Items for the November issue should be sent to ishs@hnu.edu.

19th International Summer School and Symposium on Humour and Laughter

Haus Venusberg Campus, Bonn Germany, July 1 to July 6, 2019

*Maria Bley, Lisa Linge-Dahl, Lena Straßburger, & Eckart von Hirschhausen
2019 Summer School Organizers*

The 19th International Summer School and Symposium on Humour and Laughter was held on the Haus Venusberg campus in Bonn, Germany from July 1 to July 6, 2019. The Summer School was intended to benefit both research students and more experienced researchers considering conducting research in the field of humor and laughter.

The local organizers were Lisa Linge-Dahl (University of Cologne), Lena Straßburger (University of Bonn), and Maria Bley and Eckart von Hirschhausen from the foundation, Humor Helps Healing. The teaching faculty included sixteen speakers, who provided a diversity of topics. Lectures were given by Dr. Graeme Ritchie (University of Aberdeen), Dr. Eckart von Hirschhausen (Humor Helps Healing Foundation), Prof. René Proyer (University of Halle/Wittenberg), Prof. Holger Kersten (University of Halle/Wittenberg), Prof. Jessica Milner Davis (University of Sydney), Prof. Helga Kotthoff (University of Freiburg), Prof. Oliver Wolf (University of Bochum), Laura Fernandez (Humor Helps Healing), Mieke Stoffelen (Humor Helps Healing), Rainer Kreuz (Humor Helps Healing), Prof. Tabea Scheel (University of Flensburg), Prof. Christian Hempelmann (Texas A&M University-Commerce), Prof. Corinna Peifer with Marek Bartzik (University of Bochum), Prof. Tobias Esch (University of Witten/Herdecke), Prof. Evelyn Ferstl (University of Freiburg), and the school founder, Prof. Dr. Willibald Ruch (University of Zurich). The program aimed to provide an overview of the interdisciplinary nature of humor research, by considering theory and empirical evidence, addressing special research issues, discussing methodology and evaluation of research findings to date, and also to consider some of the applications of humor and laughter. Meet the Lecturer sessions, where participants could sign up for a one-to-one discussion with a lecturer of his/her choice were made available throughout the week.

The Summer School was attended by 20 participants. The student body consisted of postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers, and university faculty members, as well as professionals (medical doctor, dentists, clowns, clinical psychologists, engineers, self-aid group leaders for borderline patients, computer science professional, practitioners working in the area of therapeutic laughter). These participants came from the UK, Germany, Switzerland, the USA, Spain, Turkey, China, Argentina, Brazil. Academic disciplines represented included Psychology, Linguistics, Culture studies, etc. The Summer School Symposium took place on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons and it featured presentations of the participants' planned or finished research, or ideas on how to implement and use humor in applied settings. Fourteen participants presented. The presentations comprised the following short talks and posters:

- Britta Piel, The Red Nose Principle
- Lucia Bugallo, Adolescents Creating Cartoons: A Cognitive and Discursive Challenge
- Karina Melo Saboya, Seven Humor Habits Program for University Students:
A Little Taste of Paul McGhee in Ceará, The Humorland of Brazil
- Philipp Borchers, Pilot Study: Structured Intervention of Humor and Laughter
Training as a Therapeutic Approach in COPD
- Julia Raecke, Fostering Social and Emotional Competencies of Medical
Assistants: What Role does Humour play?
- Roslyn E. Bacon, Benevolent and Corrective Humor and the Suspension
of Middle School African American Girls
- Florian Fischer, Experimental Study Designs for Measuring
the Effects of Humour in Health Communication
- Ekaterina But, Humor Theories and Ancient Greek Poetry
- Mattheus Bebbber, Contextual Humor

- Elena Pleshakova, Connector and Disjuncter: Complex Relationship
- Barnali Chaudhary, Humor in Visual Mode
- Lynn Higgins, Towards a Linguistic Analysis of ‘Shitposting’
- Thorsten Aichele, Effects of Contrast and Absurdity on Perceived Humor and Perceived Criticism of Ironic Utterances
- Peter Vatter, Effect of Humor on the Therapeutic Relationship in Treatment of Patients with Borderline Personality Disorder

Each symposium speaker received a drinking bottle with the logo of the Humor Helps Healing foundation. We emphasized that it is courageous and brave to present for the first time at a summer school where very experienced researchers are present. The participants made time for social events. The social program included a welcome meet-up BBQ on the Monday evening, a city tour through Bonn for Wednesday including many sights in the city center, local stores and the botanical garden, with farewell drinks with all people who were still in Bonn on Friday evening.

Information on past and future Summer Schools can be found at <https://www.humoursummerschool.org>.

32nd International Society for Humor Studies Conference

University of Bologna, Bertinoro Campus, June 29 to July 3, 2020

The 32nd ISHS Conference will take place at the University of Bologna’s Bertinoro Campus, from June 29 to July 30, 2020. Registration and the Call for Papers for the 2020 ISHS Conference is set to begin on November 1 through the Conference website at <https://eventi.unibo.it/ishs-2020>. You will be able to 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. The official call for papers will begin in November 2019 and will run through March 1, 2020.

2021 and 2022 ISHS Conference Proposals

ISHS is still accepting proposals to host the 2021 ISHS Conference in North America and the 2022 Conference outside of North America. If you are a humor scholar and would like to host the 2021 or 2022 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

Twenty-Sixth AHSN Colloquium

Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia, February 5-7, 2020

The 26th Colloquium of the Australasian Humour Studies Network (AHSN) will be held from February 5 to 7, 2020 at the Ship Inn on the Griffith University South Bank Brisbane campus. The Colloquium will be co-hosted by Professor Cliff Goddard of Griffith University’s School of Humanities, Languages and Social Science, and the Griffith Centre for Social and Cultural Research (GCSCR). The conference theme will be *Laughter and Belonging*. For more information, send e-mail to ahsnconference@gamil.com or visit AHSN at <http://www.sydney.edu.au/humourstudies>.

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

New Orleans, Louisiana, USA, May 14-17, 2020

The 33rd Conference of the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor will be held May 14 to 17, 2020 at the Doubletree by Hilton in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA. The Conference theme will be *Dx-Happiness: Treating Life with Humor*. For more information, visit the AATH Conference page at <https://aath-conference.com>.

Laughing in an Emergency: Humour in Contemporary Art

University of Manchester, United Kingdom, April 17-18, 2020

In addition to keynotes from leading international artists including Richard Bell (Australia) and Stefanos Tsivopoulos (Greece/US), we welcome proposals from scholars and practitioners addressing the interface of humour and contemporary art from diverse theoretical and methodological perspectives. Topics to be addressed include, but are not restricted to, contemporary art and the following: humour and crisis, humour and the global south, humour and identity, humour and gender, humour and resistance, humour and the museum, humour and authenticity, humour and contemporaneity, humour and the art market, humour and cultural resilience. We invite proposals for individual papers of approximately 20 minutes (allowing an extra ten minute for question/discussion time). Proposals should include a title, an abstract of approximately 300-350 words and a brief biography. Please send proposals to liae@manchester.ac.uk by **October 30, 2019**. Responses will be provided by November 30, 2019.

Book Review

Joke-Performance in Africa: Mode, Media, and Meaning

Reviewed by Noleen Turner, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa

Ignatius Chukwumah, ed. (2017). *Joke-performance in Africa: Mode, media and meaning*. Basingstoke: Taylor & Francis. XVII+290 pp. ISBN 978-1-138-06064-7.

This refreshing and extensive review of joke performance in contemporary Africa is welcome reading for any scholar of African humor, an area that has been relatively neglected compared to the extensive research conducted on humor in other parts of the globe. The book considers the pervasive phenomenon of jokes and their performance across Africa in such forms as local jests, street jokes, cartoons, stand-up comedy, internet sex jokes, and what is dubbed “comicast” – jokes transmitted via modern technological media such as cell phones, CDs, DVDs, YouTube, and Facebook.

The fourteen essays that make up this volume describe the joke form from intersecting disciplinary perspectives, including critical discourse analysis, the interactive “dramaturgy” of joke performances, and consideration of “technauriture” (the intersection of orality, the written word, and digital technology). The various contributors make use of Freud’s theory of unconscious communications delivered verbally, the general theory of verbal humor, incongruity theory, and the theory of aesthetics in oral narrative, amongst others. However, the most important contribution of this collection is to make significant inroads into the research on humor performed via modern technological media. Most of the contributions refer to the modes of impersonation as well as the media of delivery – both traditional and modern – of verbal art forms. These joke forms have mutated into various molds in our dynamic, electronically evolving era. A traditional mode of performance would normally consist of a performer, a performer’s text (most commonly oral), the performance setting, and the performance audience. In this work, these elements are transposed into the joke performer, the joke performance and joke script, the joke performance setting, and the joke performance viewers or listeners.

The joke performer is a member of a community performing essentially (but not always) to amuse the listeners. In addition, a common thread in African joke performance is the intention to educate, remonstrate, ridicule, or expose a person or situation, often with moralistic intent. In recent times, the joke performer gathers from contemporary events and humorously interprets them for the amusement of the audience. Technology allows the joke performer to reach an astonishingly larger audience, now not only local but international as well. In Chukwumah’s words, “the joke-performer can be anywhere at any time to perform anything interpretable as a joke by his or her audience” (p. 6).

As Allien (2004:20) points out, the internet is not just an electronic domain; it has become “a performance arena,” as evidenced by Kenyan puppet political satire on TV, sex jokes shared online and via WhatsApp, Nigerian “comicast” performances, and Urhobo joke performances captured and disseminated on CDs, DVDs, and YouTube. Chukwumah makes the important point that in recent times the “joke-script

has become as diverse as the constitution of the joke-auditors ... its nature as varied as the media through which it is expressed and its formation deeply rooted in Africa's traditional and contemporary cultural life" (p. 7). This current take on the traditional purpose of many humorous verbal performances, which encompasses educational and corrective processes as well as critical comment and ridicule of those in positions of authority, reveals how the media provides a platform for the joke-performed to reach a much wider audience than previously imaginable. This is evidenced in the first three chapters that describe how the governments of three African countries are satirized in various forms of e-performance media and by audiovisual mode joke performance.

Several contributors demonstrate how the traditional setting of joke-performance has altered immeasurably and now can constitute anything from a room to the airwaves in terms of TV and radio, to the internet and its accompanying social media platforms. As Chukwumah states in his essay on Nigeria's 2015 presidential election and the rise of comicast, when Karin Barber in 1987 stated that popular cultural art forms in Africa were as fluid and as elastic as the media in which they appeared, she could never have imagined the explosive multiplication of these forms in electronic media. The pervasive impact of the internet with its fluidity and manifold ways of presenting content, particularly jokes, simply could never have been imagined.

When considering the topic of joke-performance in Africa, one cannot put forward a one size fits all approach, as there are different traditions in various African countries as well as regional variations within individual countries. This collection of essays gives the reader a view of joke-performance in various forms of media in Africa and conveys an idea of what are the dominant forms of humor disseminated through the Internet. The new forms of media show how humor has evolved from traditional platforms to modern, contemporary ones, dynamically adjusting to contemporary life. Omoko's essay on art and humor amongst the Urhobo in Nigeria reflects on the significance of gender and the emergence of female performers in a field that was previously the preserve of men. This aspect of sexuality and gender is central to the argument in several essays, touching on aspects of language manipulation, linguistic preferences, and symbolism in joke delivery as well as the psychological function of sex jokes in social media platforms.

Whatever the intended purpose, the humor in the joke performances in this collection of essays reveals an occasion for the reflection of important issues of the day not only by the performer but also by the consumers of the humorous performance. In certain instances, joke-performances shape cultural values and influence the perception of the audiences in their construction of reality.

This collection of essays contains "insightful contributions from leading African scholars" acquainting readers with "detailed descriptions of the diverse aesthetics of contemporary African jokes, thereby contributing to the current understanding of joke-performance in Africa" (p.1). It will appeal to students and scholars of African studies, popular culture, theatre, performance studies, and literary studies.

Reference

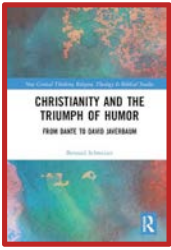
Allien, B. (2004). The new horsemen of the apocalypse: The role of drama in education. In Heide Hagebolling (ed.), *Interactive Dramaturgies. New Approaches in Multimedia Content and Design* (pp.17-22). Amsterdam: Springer.



**For more ISHS news, conference information,
and 2019 membership, visit us on the web at
www.humorstudies.org.**

Recent Publications

Christianity and the Triumph of Humor



Bernard Schweizer. (2018). *Christianity and the Triumph of Humor: From Dante to David Javerbaum*. New York, NY: Routledge. 244 pp. Cloth ISBN: 978-0-367-18510-7; Ebook ISBN: 978-0-42919-669-0.

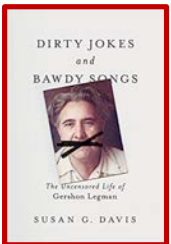
From the Publisher: This book traces the development of religious comedy and leverages that history to justify today's uses of religious humor in all of its manifestations, including irreverent jokes. It argues that regulating humor is futile and counterproductive, illustrating this point with a host of comedic examples. Humor is a powerful rhetorical tool for those who advocate and for those who satirize religious ideals. The book presents a compelling argument about the centrality of humor to the story of Western Christianity's cultural and artistic development since the Middle Ages, taking a multi-disciplinary approach that combines literary criticism, religious studies, philosophy, theology, and social science. After laying out the conceptual framework in Part 1, Part 2 analyzes key works of religious comedy across the ages from Dante to the present, and it samples the breadth of contemporary religious humor from Brad Stine to Robin Williams, and from Monty Python to *South Park*. Using critical, historical, and conceptual lenses, the book exposes and overturns past attempts by church authorities, scholars, and commentators to limit and control laughter based on religious, ideological, or moral criteria.

Conversational Humour and (Im)politeness



Valeria Sinkeviciute. (2019). *Conversational Humour and (Im)politeness*. John Benjamins: Amsterdam, Netherlands. 274 pp. Hardcover ISBN: 978-9-02720-413-4; Ebook ISBN: 978-9-02726-211-0.

From the Publisher: *Conversational Humour and (Im)politeness* is the first systematic study that offers a socio-pragmatic perspective on humorous practices such as teasing, mockery and taking the piss and their relation to (im)politeness. Analyzing data from corpora, reality television and interviews in Australian and British cultural contexts, this book contributes to cross-cultural and intercultural research on humour and its role in social interaction. Although, in both contexts, jocular verbal practices are highly valued and a positive response – the 'preferred reaction' – can be expected, the conceptualisation of what is seen as humorous can vary, especially in terms of what 'goes too far'. By examining how attempts at humour can occasion offence, presenting a distinction between 'frontstage' and 'backstage' perceptions of jocularity and looking at how language users evaluate jocular behaviours in interaction, this study shows how humour and (im)politeness are co-constructed and negotiated in discourse. This book will be of interest to scholars and students in pragmatics, conversational humour, (im)politeness, intercultural communication, discourse analysis, television studies and interaction in English-speaking contexts.



Dirty Jokes and Bawdy Songs

Susan Davis. (2019). *Dirty Jokes and Bawdy Songs: The Uncensored Life of Gershon Legman*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press. 352 pp. Cloth ISBN: 978-0-252-04261-4; Paper ISBN: 978-0-252-08444-7; Ebook ISBN: 978-0-252-05145-6.

From the Publisher: Collector of sexual folklore. Cataloger of erotica. Tireless social critic. Gershon Legman's singular, disreputable resume made him a counter-cultural touchstone during his forty-year exile in France. Despite his obscurity today, Legman's prescient work and passion for the prurient laid the groundwork for our contemporary study of the forbidden. Susan G. Davis follows the life and times of the figure driven to share what he found in civilization's secret libraries. Self-taught and fiercely unaffiliated, Legman collected the risqué on street corners and in theaters and dug it out of little-known archives. If the sexual humor he uncovered often used laughter to disguise hostility and fear, he still believed it indispensable to the human experience. Davis reveals Legman in all his prickly, provocative

complexity as an outrageous nonconformist thundering at a wrong-headed world while reveling in conflict, violating laws and boundaries with equal abandon, and pursuing love and improbable adventures. Through it all, he maintained a kaleidoscopic network of friends, fellow intellectuals, celebrity admirers, and like-minded obsessives.

Recent Articles in Humor Studies

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 June 2019. If you have a recent publication, let us know. We will include it in a future newsletter.

- Abedinifard, M. (2019). Persian “Rashti jokes”: Modern Iran’s palimpsests of Gheytrat-based masculinity. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 46(4), 564–582. doi: 10.1080/13530194.2018.1447440
- Anlı, G. (2019). Reliability and validity studies of the Turkish version of humor styles questionnaire for children. *Current Psychology: A Journal for Diverse Perspectives on Diverse Psychological Issues*. doi: 10.1007/s12144-019-00387-7
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- Clines, G. M. (2019). Taming the tamed elephant: Rāvaṇa, aesthetics, and the generation of humor in Raviṣeṇa’s Padmapurāṇa. *South Asian History & Culture*, 10(3), 309–323. doi: 10.1080/19472498.2019.1649943
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