

## EDITORIAL

### Introducing the Volume of 2014

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The contributions of this issue of *International Studies in Humour* comprise, as in the past, several disciplinary compartments: pragmatics, literary studies, and edutainment, if we are to confine ourselves to regular articles, the work-in-progress category, and the review essay category.

Magdalena Biegajło's article in pragmatics explores three approaches to joke interpretation. Her paper is concerned with the comprehension of jokes in the context of relevance-based approach with a special emphasis on the three ways of utterance interpretation — naive optimism, cautious optimism, and sophisticated understanding — and argues that naive optimism is the least crucial procedure to ascribe underlying intentions to the speaker's input.

The next article is in literary studies. The unfortunate fact that the New York-based humorist Gerson Rosenzweig only lived a few years past fifty resulted in two close anniversaries: in 2011, 150 years since his birth; and, in 2014, 100 years since his succumbing to cancer. In the inaugural issue, a long paper analysed in detail Chapter 3 — the one most closely concerned with work conditions at factories, and the attitudes of the trade unions towards immigrants — of his masterpiece, the satire *Tractate America*. In the volume of last year, a review essay on the history of American cartoons devoted a section to an attempt at interpretation of caustic self-denigration of his own immigrant station in life, as mock-parroting of stereotypes entertained around 1890 by elite opinion in New York, as reflected e.g. in anti-immigrant cartoons, of which we examined one that came quite close (in showing immigrants swimming across the ocean from Europe's gutters) to how Rosenzweig was indulging in tongue-in-cheek adoption of an immigrants' deprecation perspective, before he proceeded to reverse it, which he did by showing the huge gap between the lofty aspirations of the Constitution and the grim reality of law enforcement.

In the present issue, an article about *Tractate America* analyses its initial chapter, and discusses how the somewhat demanding requirements Rosenzweig set for his intended readership in his own days soon become way beyond what new generations could meet, because of their different, Americanised educational curriculum and secularised upbringing. *Tractate America* is the masterpiece of its genre (traditionally, as early as the Middle Ages, a minor genre of Hebrew literature), especially because Rosenzweig applied it masterfully to a terribly important subject: the core of the daily life of Old Country people in their attempt to negotiate their absorption in the U.S.

The third paper in this issue is about edutainment: Sai Pathmanathan considers the short-term impact of the learning of science such through humour in children's media, such as animation films and television children's programming.

This is followed by a review essay about the Marcolfian tradition of humorous entertainment literature from the Middle Ages — Marcolf is a boorish character, a peasant exchanging bits of wisdom and wisdom's scorn with King Solomon — and its close and more remote relations, such as Russia's mischievous centaur Kitovras, or the child prodigy Ben Sira astonishing Nebuchadnezzar with his erudition and panache, and subjecting him to pranks in a Hebrew work from Caliphal lands.

The contributions listed thus far reach a total of exactly 150 pages. We expect to add several book reviews during this year. Submissions of contributions of all kinds are welcome. Regular as well as work-in-progress papers undergo strict refereeing.