

wiania gier z frazeologią (włączonych, nawiasem mówiąc, do rozdziału *Leksyka* jako jego 15-stronicowy podrozdział końcowy), analogiczny *Алфавитный список обыгрываемых фразеологизмов*, owszem, prezentuje – ale już bez odwoływania się do danych rosyjskich słowników frazeologicznych; trudno tę niekonsekwencję zrozumieć.

Pokazany jednak został cel. Porozstawiane zostały drogowskazy. Zarysowano metodę i techniki analizy. Przedstawiono błyskotliwe przykłady odkryć językowych. Przygotowano grunt dla niebanalnej refleksji nad językiem rosyjskim i językiem ludzkim w ogóle. W chwili, gdy bez zmian szykowane jest do druku wydanie *Polskiego dowcipu językowego* Danuty Buttler, warto pracę Władimira Sannikowa wśród polskich badaczy rozpropagować, gdyż polszczyzna nie odstoniła jeszcze przed nami całej swej podszewki i, jak niewidoczna strona Księżyca, kusi eksploratorów pokładami nieodkrytych jeszcze zjawisk. Chciałoby się, by prowadząca w te przestrzenie droga, jaką wytyczył Władimir Sannikow, okazała się otwarta i perspektywiczna także dla filologów polskich.

WOJCIECH CHLEBDA

ŚWIAT HUMORU, Ed. by Stanisław Gajda and Dorota Brzozowska, Opole, Poland: University of Opole: 2000. ISBN 83-86881-27-5. In English, Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, Czech, Slovak, Byelorussian, Serbo-Croatian. No price listed.

The multilingual, multithematic **World of Humor** contains most of the papers selected for presentation at the 2000 international conference on “The Style of Humor,” organized by the Institute of Polish Philology of the Opole University in a joint sponsorship with the Stylistic Commission of the Linguistics Committee in the Polish Academy of Sciences. Co-editor Gajda lists this conference as the 12th annual gathering on stylistics in Poland, starting in 1991.

The strength of the volume is its breadth: while the international conferences on humor exceed it both in breadth and in depth, as well as being much more up to date in terms of humor research and adjacent disciplines, they do not, unfortunately, publish their proceedings, limiting the conference materials to very short abstracts. The weakness of the volume, which it shares with many volumes of proceedings, is the impression of stuff just thrown together hastily. It is only fair to say, however, that the editors seem to have done their best, within very limited

time and money constraints, to minimize this impression. They made valid attempts both to group the papers in a meaningful way and to start each section with the most general and representative paper, sort of setting the tone or at least defining the limits for the section (they failed, characteristically, to achieve it in the chaotic humor and literature section, corresponding to the pretty disorganized humor-in-literature field of study).

The lead articles of the other four sections, Humor as a Cultural Phenomenon, Everyday Humor, Humor in Politics and Advertising, and Humor in School and Church, are characteristically and patriotically in Polish. The multilinguality of the volume raises an extremely controversial host of such interrelated issues as cultural allegiance, intended audience, and state-of-the-art level of contributions. There was a time when international conferences, including, most prominently perhaps, the International Congresses in Linguistics, accepted contributions in many languages. There was once a time when various nations prided themselves on their sciences done in their languages, limiting the international exposure to short English summaries at best. The policies of such states, accommodated at least in part by international organizations sponsoring conferences, may not have changed officially but the multilinguality has simply stopped happening commonly if not entirely. The international conferences routinely take place in English only, and it is taken for granted both by the organizers and participants.

While one may respect the cultural patriotism of some scholars one must also face honestly what a contribution in a language other than English, especially a "small" language, usually entails. First, it will be read by a very small group of readers, whom it may be intended for, thus taking the local and provincial character, often with the agenda of enlightening the community of academic progress on the outside. Such contributions tend to be insular in bibliographic terms, reflecting the author's failure to capture adequately the state of the art in the field – quite frequently, especially in the recent past, through no fault of the author, whose access to international resources may have been limited politically and or financially. But now we have the Internet and e-mail: just about any source can be found on the former and/or requested as an attachment in the latter. In this situation, the decision not to publish in English becomes much more "loaded," as it were: it may indicate the author's lack of proficiency in English and often related lack of preparation in the field dominated by English-language materials. It is interesting to note that, out of the seven English-language contributions in the volume, four and a half are written by non-native speakers (the half is attributed

to Christie Davies, who, on alternate days, claims Welsh or English as his native tongues, while being of course a closeted bilingual).

Yet another difficulty of a multilingual publication is finding a reviewer for it. How often does an editor run at an international conference into a former memory freak, who wasted his teenage years on learning foreign languages instead of chasing girls and accepting the rare offers of a roll in the sack? A native speaker of a now largely defunct Moscow dialect of Soviet Russian, who has worked and communicated almost exclusively in English for close to three decades, this reviewer learned Polish back in 1956 in order to read the old "Przekroi" for sexual and political zingers against the Communist, especially Russian, establishment, strangely overlooked by Soviet censors of foreign publications. My familiarity with the other Slavic languages is, however, somewhat limited to whatever a Russian reader can glean from the text, enhanced by linguistic knowledge, cultural literacy, and gigantic doses of *chutzpah*, a valuable international commodity possessed in abundance but not limited to the Jews.

Among the seven papers in the first section, *Humor as a Cultural Phenomenon*, two, Krzysztof Wieczorek's *Sense of Humor and Philosophy*¹ and Przemyslaw Rotengruber's *Between Irony and Solidarity: About the Post-Modernist Sense of Humor*, one of the two longest papers in the volume, deal with philosophy. The former paper covers the familiar terrain of early and casual remarks on humor by various philosophers from Aristotle to Husserl and moves from that to the unfamiliar recent work by Polish scholars, some of which deserves greater international distribution. The former paper, characteristically, buries the subject in intellectually prestigious and sometimes tantalizing verbiage, as any work invoking Rorty, tends to do, while ignoring Bergson's essential dichotomy of *laughing with* and *laughing at*, the one idea importantly rehashed over and over again in the work; still, the bibliography, spread out unhelpfully in the footnotes, combining the likes of such post-modernist icons as Derrida, Habermas, and even "the end of history" Fukuyama (let alone the ubiquitous Rorty) with Hegel and Freud (but not Bergson) is something I would welcome at the end of any paper on humor – it is the content of the paper that I would work on to improve.

The two papers of the Raskin school, Amy Carrell's *Two Facets of Communicative Competence: Joke Competence and Humor Competence* and Salvatore Attardo's *The Analysis of Humorous Literary Texts: The Case of Register Hu-*

1 Here and everywhere, the English titles of non-English-language papers are the titles of the short English summaries, neither of them, the titles or the summaries, being very accurate on occasion.

mor, extend the script-based semantic theory of humor (SSTH) and the general theory of verbal humor (GTVH) in two different and important directions. The former author's definitive book on the crucial and underexplored role of audience in humor research, based on her pioneering 1993 doctoral dissertation is taking much too long in being completed for publication in the Mouton de Gruyter Humor Series, which just produced Attardo's *Humorous Texts: A Semantic and Pragmatic Analysis*, the largest contribution to date on the humor of longer texts. It will be followed shortly, it is hoped, by Wladyslaw Chlopicki's excellent Ph.D. Jagellonian University dissertation on the subject (in English!), proposing a related but clearly distinct take on the same subject. Chlopicki's *Linguistic Analysis of Humour in Short Stories*, also based on SSTH, is hiding in the literary section of the volume. Continuing to expose open and closet Raskinists, Robert Lew's *A Look at Current Linguistic Theory and Its Treatment of Linguistic Jokes*, a spinoff of his 1996 Ph.D. thesis from the University of Poznan, was placed in the everyday-humor section. It was gratifying to see that Christie Davies, no more a Raskinist than I am a Daviesist (meaning that we both are, not that we are not!), remains true to our mutual adoration pact of 1979 and manages to quote Raskin 1985 in his *Mr. Polly and the Good Soldier Svejk: A Contrast in Style and Social Context*, smack in the middle of the literary section of the volume, just as I never fail to quote his ethnic-humor books no matter what I publish¹. A recent development in Davies' outstanding scholarship is the interest in establishing unexpected cross-cultural connections only he is qualified to detect: besides this one between H. G. Wells and Jaroslav Hašek in this paper, he stunned the 2001 International Conference on Humor by his plenary talk, in which he convincingly and elegantly argued that the peculiarities and prominence of Jewish humor should be explained not by the universally accepted but not terribly revealing or factually correct arguments for its uniqueness but rather by the properties the Jewish culture and humor share with their Scottish counterparts – largely, the relentless argumentativeness of both. But enough about me.

Going back to the humor as cultural phenomenon section, the remaining two papers join the vast majority of contributions to the volume. Written mostly by competent and interesting scholars in languages other than English, they show a limited familiarity with the state of the art in humor research and often reinvent

1 Including such humor-free areas as natural language processing, a branch of computer science. Speaking of which, Sergei Nirenburg and I managed to insert a quote from *Good Soldier Svejk* into our just completed *Ontological Semantics*.

the wheel. Each may have a targeted audience other than the international community of humor researchers, so my perspective of a long-time editor of a journal read by this community, may be skewed, but I do feel frustrated when I read interesting stuff that I cannot recommend for publication because some new and original ideas are interwoven with observations, often also presented as new insights, that are well-known to the readership. My other problem as editor has been first-timers, scholars from other disciplines writing about humor for the first time and not even suspecting that there is a huge body of knowledge on the subject that they are responsible for relating their scholarship to in an explicit fashion.

Having said this, I will now proceed to comment selectively on some papers and ideas that caught my eye for one reason or another. I apologize to those numerous contributors, whose papers I will not be able to mention individually – this does not constitute criticism or rejection, just that there was something in the other papers that appealed – or failed to appeal – to this individual reviewer.

Konstantin F. Sedov's *Anecdote as a Type of Everyday Communication*, the other longest paper in the volume, contains a few interesting ideas and unexpected references but they are hard to glean from a lengthy and redundant illustration of what a joke is, accompanied by a list of jokes and the author's thoughts about each of them. Most of the paper is a restatement of what is well known to the humor research community (but possibly new to the author), and this genre of milking the joke examples for ideas and imposing hasty taxonomies on them has proven to be the least insightful genre of publication in humor research. Written in Russian, the paper, characteristically, does not use a single non-Russian reference in the bibliography.

Dorota Brzozowska's *Jokes in Poland at the Turn of the Century* is a very solid piece of research of a kind that is not done enough - it is a look at the kind of humor and its role at a certain synchronic stage of an individual society. The claims are modest – the author does not aspire to derive the humor from the actual events in a popular and tautological way – and they are borne out by the carefully selected and well-presented evidence. The fact that some –if not most – jokes are not originally Polish does not subtract from the fact that they did play a role in the Polish society of the time. The paper contains more than enough substance to counterbalance the standardly useless but apparently obligatory references to the prolix Wierzbicka, generously spread throughout the East European, especially Polish, contributions.

The value of Vadim V. Dement'ev's *Flirtation as a Type of Communication* is primarily in looking at a rarely described mode of discourse. Its combination of

“prestigious” references and important-sounding but rather superficial and non-intuitive taxonomies, sprinkled with timid ventures into the “obscene,” cannot camouflage the fact that the paper is not about humor at all. A non-European reader would be additionally baffled because the author assumes, rather provincially, that flirtation is the same in all cultures. Highly ritualized in some African and Asian cultures, it is a prelude to sex in this country, often lasting no longer than the notorious Italian American foreplay (“Honey, I am home!”), rather than the sex substitute it often is in Europe.

The local-interest nature of some papers throughout the volume is perfectly justified when the focus remains on the local, dialectal, and ritual varieties of humor rather than on sweeping generalizations about humor or universal taxonomies of it from such a limited perspective. I found the last six papers of the everyday humor section rather gratifying in this respect even if a couple of them are too short. These include Izabela Kaczmarzyk’s *The Role of the Comic in the 17th Century Silesian Literature*, Anna Jasik’s *Thanatological-Funerary Humor in Students’ Language* [in Opole, Poland], Miroslav Vesizh’s *The Elements of Humor in Serbian Folk Tradition*, Zbynek Holub’s *The Humorous Features of Verbal Traditionalism in the Doudleby Area* [of South Bohemia], Mikola and Yulya Alyakhnovich’s *The Semantics of Humor and the Sense of Phrases in the Folk Ritual Context* [of Byelorussian folklore], and Galina Stupins’ka’s *Humor and Phraseology of the Lemko Dialect in Ukrainian*.

By contrast to many other papers, Jan Hoffmannova’s concise and well-written *Humor and Politics* (“*We Have Heard in the Parliament*”) uses primarily internationally visible English-language references but ignores Joe Boskin’s seminal work on political humor, apparently, because it is from a different discipline. This disciplinary limitation is shared with the author by an absolute majority of humor scholars throughout the world, and it is one of the biggest hurdles the field should overcome on its way to unification and maturity. In fact, none of the other papers on humor and politics shows any familiarity with Boskin’s work just as the paper on humor and advertising seems to be unaware of Michael Geiss’s book on the language of advertising or of the important work on the subject in *Humor*¹ Similarly, the pedagogical section does not take advantage of Avner Ziv’s several decades of leadership in the field.

1 In general, there is no more excuse for most of the authors to have ignored the best of international humor scholarship published in the journal since 1988.

I will conclude by reiterating a couple of important points. First, my apologies again to those esteemed colleagues whose work I have not had a chance to single out (the way I treated some of those contribution that I did single out may make those “overlooked” authors feel lucky...). Second, I cannot urge the East European contributors strongly enough to share their enormous erudition and excellent education with the world community of scholars by joining it in substance. Now that the political barriers are largely down and the financial limitations are superceded by Internet access, there is no more excuse to conceal one’s innovative ideas in a tight closet of non-English text that is not based on solid international scholarship. Translation? Write in English after having read a lot in English. I am sorry it sounds so Yankee-imperialist, especially coming from a multilingual, European-educated, and proudly cosmopolitan reviewer, but this is how things are in academia these days. Believe me, I would give similar advice to a 12th-century monk trying to write on a scholarly subject in a language other than Latin – provided, of course, that he would have listened to advice from a Jew! Finally, the editors should be congratulated again on bringing about a collection of such laudable breadth.

VICTOR RASKIN

LIBOR PAVERA, OD STŘEDOVĚKU K ROMANTISMU. ÚVAHY O STARŠÍ LITERATUŘE, Filozoficko-přírodovědecká fakulta Slezské univerzity v Opavě, 2000, 226 s.

Na konferenci, kterou pořádal Uniwersytet Opolski v roce 1999, vystoupil s příspěvkem o humoru ve starší české literatuře Libor Pavera. O rok později vychází knižní soubor jeho prací pod názvem *Od středověku k romantismu. Úvahy o starší literatuře*. Obsahuje několik studií dokazujících, že ve středověké kultuře rozhodně nechyběl humor založený na výsměchu namířenému proti příslušníkům některých profesí (proti studentům, sluhům mastičkářům apod.), ale také například proti ženám. Současně Pavera ukazuje, že neobvyklé nebyly ani snahy o parodii “vyšší” literatury a že smích nebyl cizí ani barokním kazatelům; někteří z nich obohacování barokních kázání vtipnými historkami a humorem přímo doporučovali