Foreword

A good sense of humour ranks high among the qualities that many people expect of their spouses, friends and acquaintances – a ‘requirement’ that people be acquainted with jokes, quips, one-liners, humorous quotations, and any talk that could liven up dull moments especially unexpectedly. As of two decades ago, the ‘provision’ and availability of humour had been limited to the print and electronic media – that is, books, newspapers, the radio and television – but the advent of the Internet has endowed the present century with other possibilities for the creation, dissemination and consumption of humour.

In addition, humour these days is both composite and multimodal: humour providers can combine any number of devices and strategies to make others chuckle, laugh or guffaw. This reality is enhanced by the various outlets available to the humour provider: blogs, chat-forums, and platforms like the Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, WeChat, etc. What with the growing popularity of blogs and similar websites, the society is able to evaluate humour through comments and also increase existing stock by providing further humour in all computer-mediated communication. Thus, one can assertively say that humour and its provision are both enjoying unprecedented societal acceptance and appreciation.

The digital age is effectively the ‘crown-prince era’ of all that gives mirth, whether this be text, image or face-to-face interaction. The availability of the Internet immediately guarantees the institutionalization of a format that encourages both the study of humour on the Internet and the generation of online humour. So, for the researcher as well as the visitor to the sites providing ‘humour services’, there are resources that fulfil everyone’s desire.

The present book is a marker of that fulfilment, judging by the vastness and appeal of its contents. Adopting diverse analytical, theoretical and methodological perspectives, the contributors offer exceptional descriptions of the nature and character of humour from such sources as politics, journalism, interpersonal relationships, religious worship, ethnic affiliations, trade and commerce, activism, gender, identity and equality, and education. More importantly, the contributors approach their descriptions from diverse analytical orientations: Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Discourse Stylistics, Critical Discourse Analysis, Pragmatics, Conversation Analysis, Semiotics, Ethnography, Ethnolinguistics, and Computer-mediated Discourse Analysis. Part of the appeal of the book, in fact, is the comprehensiveness and relevance of all these approaches to the analysis and description of the subject matter – whether humour is used to amuse us, criticise authorities, highlight issues or resolve conflict.

In tune with the overall goal of its authors, this book will be a landmark reference compass in regard to issues relating to humour in all its forms and characterizations, and although it’s all about humour, its contents and concerns are not a laughing matter by any manner of means.

Adeleke A. Fakoya
Lagos State University, Nigeria