

Editor's Introduction

Lydia Amir*

This issue of the *Israeli Journal of Humor Research: An International Journal* contains four articles and one review. The first article is about the philosophy of Plato, how the way he sees the pleasures of comedy help reconstruct his views of humor and comedy and solve the apparent paradox his thought on humor presents: his negative statements on humor and laughter together with the ample use he makes of them.

Two additional articles address humor in literature, as used in a novel by the Israeli writer, Maya Arad, in one case, and in the novels by the Nigerian writer, Chukwuemeka Ike, in the other: Both authors find the literary humor these writers use as revealing social knowledge and carrying social criticism.

The last article investigates humor as a feminine religious rhetorical device in the lessons of the famous figure, Rabbanit Yemima Mizrahi., which attracts thousands of women, religious and non-religious, Israeli and non-Israeli alike.

This issue's book review, written by the editor of the Journal, Lydia Amir, introduces Arie Sover's anthology, *The Languages of Humor: Verbal, Visual, and Physical Humor* (2018). Thus, yet again, this issue prides itself for its internationality and multi-disciplinarity.

In the first article, American philosopher, Lauren Olin, investigates the pleasures of comedy in Plato's philosophy with the aim, first, to reconstruct his view on the topics of humor and comedy, and secondly, to examine in light of that reconstruction the prima facie paradox his negative statements about humor create when compared with his interest in and use of humor. This is an important topic, as many have noticed Plato's negative remarks, and while few have commented on his positive use of humor and laughter, the paradox has not been solved. Olin argues that Plato's discussion of comedy in the *Philebus* is intended to apply narrowly to the case of malicious comedy. However, in light of the broader context of the *Philebus*, Plato's account is possessed of resources to explain both why humor is a valuable part of the good life, and why, for some individuals, exposure to humor brings only deleterious effects and should not be indulged.

* **Lydia Amir**, Visiting Professor, Department of Philosophy, Tufts University, Medford, MA, USA; lydamir@mail.com

In “‘Enlistment Is Mandatory—Keeping Secrets Part of the Story!’ (A quote taken from Maya Arad’s novel of 2003 [Stanza 32, 17]): On Different Variations of Humor in Utterances on Jewishness, Zionism, and Israeliness in the Novel *Another Place—A Foreign City*,” Israeli Literature professor, Ofra Matzov-Cohen, examines utterances about Jewishness, Zionism, and Israeliness found in Arad’s novel, which seem to be shaped by humoristic means intertwined with satiric undertones. Her aim is to explore the humoristic undertones in the novel and the contribution of this humor to the different meanings of the work. Humor is utilized in the plot from beginning to end not only as a stylistic means of creating meaning through verbal expressions that generate humor, she argues, rather also as an inflective decoration. The rhyming verses create a seemingly joyous, lighthearted, and unconstrained atmosphere, which draws the reader closer to the work and to the events in the plot. However, Matzov-Cohen argues that the different types of humor, such as dark humor, cynicism, and ridicule, insinuate that it is used as a subversive means of criticism, and the topics raised require the reader to rethink issues that come to the fore regarding Israeli and Jewish identity.

In “Chukwuemeka Ike: Humor and the Burden of Casual Criticism,” Charles Alex Patrick from Samuel Adegboyega University, in Ogwa, Edo State, in Nigeria, follows with a study of the Nigerian novelist. He calls for a thorough rereading of Ike’s works rather than engaging in armchair criticisms which robs Ike off his merits as a creative writer. He bases this criticism of this attitude on a rejection of the view that Ike uses humor for mere entertainment. Based on a close reading of some of Ike’s novels and on the theoretical framework Henri Bergson’s theory of humor provides, Patrick’s study shows that Ike is rather a consummate humorist who takes delight in using satirical humor to critically examine and evaluate his society.

Finally, in “Humor in the Lessons of Rabanit Yemima Mizrachi,” the Hebrew language researcher, Bat-Zion Yemini, analyses humor as part of the rhetorical devices which the famous religious figure uses to attract thousands of women (religious and non-religious, Israeli and non-Israeli) to the lessons she gives on the part of the bible one has to read during a specific week. Talking about the issues that occupy every woman, her message of sisterhood is based on the broadest common denominator of women. In each weekly portion of the Bible, she illuminates the feminine aspect, and adapts it to our times by using a language that emphasizes equality and employing an impressive range of rhetorical devices. One of these is humor, in which she draws on literary and linguistic devices. Bat-Zion Yemini provides numerous examples of the Rabbanit’s

humorous utterances, which shed light on her unique and persuasive style and the secret of her success.

I hope you will enjoy reading this new issue of the *Israeli Journal of Humor Research: An International Journal*.

Lydia Amir

Editor of IJHR