

Editor's Introduction

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This issue of the *Israeli Journal of Humor Research: An International Journal* offers innovative research, from a variety of disciplines and by authors from Italy, the United States and Israel. It comprises five articles and one review.

In "Humor in Cinema: Slapstick," Mariselda Tassarolo focuses on the comic film subgenre that began with silent movies. Based on body language and gags, it includes eccentric characters as well, and draws on numerous human features, against which the greatest comic actors have measured themselves. Tassarolo purports to analyze why slapstick arouse laughter and the rules that are infringed by slapstick comedy for laughter to take place. Starting from the analysis of laughing as a human characteristic, she dwells on Susanne K. Langer's study of comedy in order to highlight the sociological aspect of laughter and reviews the work of various comic actors such Antonio de Curtis (Totò), Paolo Villaggio, Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy, and Jerry Lewis. She reaches the conclusion that comic characters always made us laugh because at an unconscious level they remind us of our childhood, which is the merriest, most playful and carefree time in our life. Thus, the primary rule for comicity is the childish behavior of the comic actor, a constant in the greatest protagonists. A great comedian is an artist, she argues, as he enacts great openness of mind and does not rely on a single model; yet as the gags he improvises while performing are the result of a maturation of his experience through practice, he is also a craftsman. The accord between a comic actor and his audience is an interactive process: Comicity is the "bodymental" interaction with an object, which can be intersubjective thanks to human beings' common genetic heritage and evolutionary history.

In "Gelotophobia, Attachment, and Humor Production: Further Test of a Security Theory," Nathan Miczo argues that gelotophobia, the fear of being laughed at, potentially mediates relationships between attachment insecurity (anxiety, avoidance) and two forms of humor production (positive, negative). In the article, he analyzes the findings of a study in which participants completed the Experiences in Close Relationships scale, the Humor Orientation Scale, the Humor Aggressiveness Scale, and the Geloph-15. He found that attachment anxiety was related to more aggressive humor and greater gelotophobia; attachment avoidance was negatively associated with humor orientation and positively related to gelotophobia, and

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gelotophobia was negatively related to both forms of humor production. Finally, he found evidence that gelotophobia mediated the relationships between attachment anxiety and HAS and attachment avoidance and HOS.

In “Tales of the Bizarre: Notes on the Nature of Humor and Reality,” Eric Shouse maintains that professional comedians can teach something about the nature of humor and human existence. Drawing upon in-depth interviews with stand-up comedians about the strangest events they ever experienced on or off stage, he argues that humor always blurs boundaries, and therefore any claim about what really happened, what an instance of humor really means, is misguided. The professional comedians’ “tales of the bizarre” he relates in this article provide a starting point for questioning some of the underlying assumptions of humor theory. He argues that a careful reading of these narratives suggests the lived experience of humor takes place not in a shared cognitive universe, but in a subjective multiverse.

Next, in “Tootsie in the Classroom: Male Comedians Performing Female Teachers on Israeli Television,” Ornat Turin examines the underlying meanings of the phenomenon of men impersonating women teachers on Israeli television entertainment shows. She shows that the “teachers in drag” reveal themselves as hybrid figures constructed by a long line of incongruities, which may derive from a basic tension that exists between the professional (public) and gender (private) identities of women teachers. She suggests that this message is conveyed through a grotesque drag show in order to inform the audience that a historically masculine role necessarily diminishes the woman’s femininity. She concludes that this combination of stereotypes of both teachers and women conspires to produce an exceptionally grotesque and despicable figure.

Borrowing from Maria Lugones’ work on playful “world-traveling” and W.E.B. Du Bois’ notion of “double consciousness,” Chris A. Kramer argues in “World-Travelling, Double Consciousness, and Laughter” that humor can facilitate an openness and cooperative attitude among an otherwise closed, even adversarial audience. Focusing on subversive humor, which is employed by or on behalf of those who have been continually marginalized, he maintains that such humor can foster the desire to listen to others and, if only for brief moments, adopt their point of view. To be able to see oneself as others see you can also be a desirable capacity, he argues, because along with such multidimensional seeing comes an epistemic advantage lacking in those who have no need nor desire to see as others do. Such humor is aesthetic, pleasurable in and of itself, and not amenable to scientific dissection. But it is also a skill that can be honed into

a powerful tool of persuasion in circumstances where straightforward arguments are less effective. It can raise consciousness about the lived experiences of those suffering under systemic oppression and foster world travelling. Thus, subversive humor encourages audiences to playfully travel across worlds and “tarry along” with the perspectives of the marginalized.

This issue ends with Jennifer Marra’s complimentary review of Steven Gimbel, *Isn’t That Clever: A Philosophical Account of Humor and Comedy*. (New York: Routledge, 2017).

Wishing you all a happy new year, I hope you will enjoy reading yet another exciting issue of the *Israeli Journal of Humor Research: An International Journal*.

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Editor of IJHR