

EDITORIAL**Humour in Italy Through the Ages. Part II****Ephraim Nissan**

This is the second part of the thematic double issue about humour in Italy, a double issue that constitutes the 2016 volume of the journal *International Studies in Humour*. In the previous issue, the historical scope is from the Middle Ages to early 19th century, except in the penultimate section of the survey that concludes that journal issue: in that particular section, parodies from the early 20th century were exemplified and discussed. Parody is also the subject of the middle article, of the five included in the present issue, Vol. 5, No. 2,

In this second part of the thematic double issue, coverage of media comprises such humour that was conveyed through prose, poetry, graphics, and cinema. In this issue, articles (in English, and one in Italian) appear, which research humour itself expressed in either Italian, or the Italian dialects of Rome, i.e., the “romanesco comune” and the “giudaico-romanesco”. Consider however that the name of the cinematic comic character of Checco Zalone (discussed in Carlo Anelli’s article) is based on wordplay from Apulia, for “What a proud boorish ignoramus!”

The first article in this issue is “On Pascarella’s Discovery of America, or, On Being Gullible”: it is concerned with the poet, writer and painter Cesare Pascarella (1858–1940), and his epic — a charming epic written as a series of sonnets in the Roman dialect — *La Scoperta de l’America*, first published in 1894, and cast in the form of a narrative poem, a sequence of sonnets, supposedly performed at a Roman tavern by a storyteller with whom listeners interact. What Pascarella has to say, by posturing naïveté, about Columbus’ America actually says a lot about Europe, and about human nature in general. Pascarella’s humorous epic is told through the imagination of a Roman who stays in Rome, and whose reference system is firmly and materially bound to living in Rome, even though he also entertains general ideas about the Italian nation. This was at a time, the 1890s, when masses of poorer Italians were leaving their country, hoping for a better future in the Americas. It was then a time when America was quite present in the Italian popular imaginary, and it is important to realise that the storyteller’s complaint about Columbus having to leave Italy in order to pursue opportunities abroad, projects back in time a complaint that was acutely relevant to Italy when Pascarella was writing. In Pascarella’s *The Discovery of America*, anachronisms abound as the modern Roman storyteller has modern elements from his own Rome intrude in the account of Columbus, but as Columbus is in the Iberian Peninsula (and convincing the wrong queen: the Queen of Portugal instead of the Queen Castile), there also is a geographical dislocation when Columbus is made to describe the kind of ships he requires by reference to the riverine boats carrying goods into modern papal Rome.

The second article is “A Comic Vision in a Folk-Taxonomy of Folk: Considerations about Giacomina Limentani’s *Un’identità ebraica romana* (A Roman Jewish Identity)”. Limentani is both a literary writer and an essayist. The article considers an essay of hers, which reminisces and supplies important ethnography about comic nicknames that families used to be given inside the Ghetto of Rome.

Primo Levi is primarily in the literary canon because of his tragic memoirs about the Holocaust and his surviving it. And yet, he was no foreigner to humour. In particular, Alberto Cavaglion’s article (in Italian, but with an English abstract) — “Il Sistema Parodico. Parodie giocose e parodie sacre in *Se questo è un uomo*” — is

about Primo Levi's use of sacred parody, and more generally, about parody in 20th-century Italy. In his paper, to say it with the English abstract, Cavaglian "develops an intuition of Marco Belpoliti, to the effect that parody is one of the main keys for analysing shorter narrative works by Primo Levi. The present study tries to show that the parodic theme is present in Primo Levi's whole *oeuvre*, from the *Shema* within *Se questo è un uomo* (*What is a Man?*), to his collections of short stories *Vizio di forma*, *Storie naturali* and *Il sistema periodico*. Within the short compass of this article, we reconstruct the 'Turin web of parodies', upon which Levi drew liberally in his literary writings". In particular, Primo Levi's use of the parody subgenre of the sacred parody is considered.

The fourth article in this issue is by Emanuela Morganti, who has developed a body of research, in her dissertations and in the long study published here, "The Caricaturist's Committed Pencil: A Suggested Analysis of the Italian Caricatures of Gabriele Galantara, 1888–1937", about that technically accomplished political (and gag) cartoonist, who from an early career as an anticlerical socialist, went on to promote fascist ideology and the racist and imperial policies of Mussolini's regime.

The fifth, and last, article in the thematic double issue about humour in Italy is by Carlo Anelli, "Checco Zalone's Unguarded Patrimony", about 21st-century cinema, and the *cinapanettone* genre in particular. One particular comedy film of 2011 is examined, *Che bella giornata* (*What a Beautiful Day*), about Middle Eastern terrorist threats to Italy, and the conclusion that a lady infiltrator reaches: terrorist do not need to intervene, as the protagonist, Checco Zalone, professionally a guardian of the cultural heritage, is so disastrous he will surely do their work for them. In other words: with friends like these, who needs enemies?

In the preparation of the thematic double issue, "Humour in Italy Through the Ages", special efforts were made not only so that high research standard would be made, but also in order to ensure coverage dense enough that the two issues could be usefully used in the context of teaching, in either Italian studies, or humour studies. I am confident that readers will appreciate the result.

From Cesare Pascarella (1894) to Checco Zalone (2011):

