

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

The 2016 volume of the journal *International Studies in Humour* comprises two issues. They constitute a double thematic issue, the theme being “Humour in Italy Through the Ages”. The scope excludes antiquity, but spans the Middle Ages (as early as before the Millennium), up to the present. Media include prose, poetry, graphics, and cinema (the latter two appear in articles published in Part II, in Vol. 5, No. 2). The languages in which the humour comprised in the coverage span Italian, humanists’ Latin, Italo-Romance dialects (such as early modern Neapolitan, Sicilian, or, in Part II, the Italian dialects of Rome, i.e., the “romanesco comune” and the “giudaico-romanesco”, as well as literary medieval Hebrew from Italy).

Special care has been taken so that the double special issue would be useful both for scholarly purposes, and for teaching at Italian studies departments. Therefore, whereas in Part II all contributions (apart from the initial editorial page) are refereed articles, in Part I several refereed articles from North America are interleaved with fillers enhancing coverage, namely, a “Resource” item (excerpts from a classic text of 1904 about Sicilian folklore by Giuseppe Pitrè) following Alberto Iozzia’s article about a genre of Sicilian humour — the *vastasate*, “farces about streetporters” (*vastasi*) — and two “editorial postscripts”, both of these being surveys. One of these follows Roberta Cauchi-Santoro’s article about the humour of Giacomo Leopardi; the editorial postscript introduces Leopardi to the uninitiated, and then follows versions of his character, the demon Farfarello, throughout Italian texts, from a vivacious episode in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, to a travelogue, to Sicilian folktales. The other editorial postscript, of seventy pages, is a non-exhaustive survey of Italy’s humour from the Middle Ages to the 17th century (the Seicento), with special attention paid to the many humorous genres of the 16th (the Cinquecento). The coverage of that survey includes also some rather obscure, yet rather instructive authors of the Cinquecento. The temporal span of the survey that concludes Part I enhances the coverage of Part I; the section before the survey’s conclusions leaps to the early 20th century, in order to show how complex and rewarding parodies appeared. Parody (by Immanuel Romano of Dante’s *Vita nuova*) appears also in a section about the Middle Ages in the survey.

The regular refereed articles of Part I are sorted in reverse chronological order, in respect of the historical period of their respective subject matter. Roberta Cauchi-Santoro analyses humour in Giacomo Leopardi (a poet, author of prose, and philologist active in the 1810s–1830s, and usually associated with pessimism) according to three theories of humour. Alberto Iozzia is concerned with a genre of Sicilian dialectal farces from the 18th century, with the class conflict they reflected, and a multilingual society. The humour and irony of a literary work of the Baroque in the Neapolitan dialect, Pompeo Sarnelli’s *Posilecheata* (1684), which comprises five fables, is the subject of Daniela D’Eugenio’s paper. She is concerned with proverbs in particular. The next article, by Stefano Gulizia, is about a controversy between two Italian humanists writing in Latin in the 15th century, Lorenzo Valla and Poggio Bracciolini; Gulizia discusses satire and irony in that acrimonious dispute. Fabian Alfie introduces and supplies a facing translation into English of Immanuel’s *Bisbidis*.

William Shakespeare, *qua* comedigrapher, deserves that we mention that the year 2016 marks four hundred years since his demise. The year 2016 is also the centennial year of the death of Sholem Aleichem, the Yiddish greatest humorist.