

Editorial

Lydia Amir¹

The Israeli Journal of Humor Studies: An International Journal publishes from 2023 one issue per year instead of two. This 2024 issue holds four articles and two book reviews. Different disciplines and various topics contribute as usual to its interest.

We begin with an analysis of “Humor as a Rhetorical Device in the Speeches of Gamal Abdel Nasser,” undertaken by Aadel Shakkour from Al-Qasemi Academy in Israel. Shakkour shows how Egypt’s former President Gamal Abdel Nasser (from 1954 until his death in 1970) relied on humor as a rhetorical device in the metaphorical discourse in his speeches. He focuses especially on how he used humor in this discourse to attack his fiercest political opponents, the Muslim Brotherhood. Using humor, Nasser emphasized his socialist worldview built on values of equality, a worldview cognitively distant from that of the Muslim Brotherhood. Nasser turned to humorous metaphors to emotionally arouse and manipulate his audience, thereby increasing his popularity and strengthening his support. Shakkour’s study uses the theoretical framework of conceptual metaphor developed by Lakoff and Johnson to investigate and explore the target and source domains that Nasser drew on to conceptualize various aspects of the Muslim Brotherhood. He argues that with humorous metaphors, Nasser was able to ignite hatred against the Muslim Brotherhood, showing that their stated values and worldview served as a cover for their true intentions, namely to seize power, control Egyptian citizens with an iron fist, and suppress their rights, thus contradicting the religious values they claimed to support.

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We follow with “On the Moral Status of Irony,” an enquiry into that trope offered by philosopher Dustin Peone. Peone notes that irony has a special character amongst the poetic tropes, it can arise only when humans have achieved the powers of reflection and abstraction. The use of irony presupposes that human beings have learned how to feign or how to *deliberately* speak falsely, thus, it rests on the capacity for willful deception. Peone remarks that irony has arisen at the same time as philosophy because irony depends upon the development of reflection. He enquires into its moral status, and argues that insofar as it grows out of reflection, it is capable of expressing the most profound ideas; however, since it depends upon the power to feign, there is always something suspect about irony: it is akin to lying. Thus, if we wish to claim that lying is immoral, the question arises whether there is any way to redeem irony. Interrogating the Janus face of irony and ironical speech, Peone reaches the conclusion that the moral problem of irony is a problem that attaches to language itself: Language seldom, if ever, allows us to speak the literal truth, yet irony, like other poetic tropes, is a corrective for language—though it says what is not, it nevertheless reveals what is in a way that straightforward speech often cannot.

In “Disgrace to the Knesset: On Garbage Pail Kids, Caricature and Political Satire in Israel,” Ido Noy from Shenkar College of Engineering, Design, and Art in Israel argues that the Israeli version of Garbage Pail Kids had a significant impact on local political discourse. Originally produced by Topps Chewing Gum, Inc. (Brooklyn, New York), a localized version of Garbage Pail Kids sticker cards was distributed in Israel between 1987 and 1988. Although intended as a children’s product, the Hebrew translation, “Havurat HaZevel,” became a coined term frequently used by publicists and Israeli parliament members to describe the ultimate “other”—be it a movement, group, party, or a faction within the coalition or opposition. Choosing “Havurat HaZevel” as a model for political satire, the artists aimed to express their aversion to what they

perceived as wrong, loathsome, and shameful. Noy highlights how the use of “Havurat HaZevul” in the Israeli political arena has led to several spin-offs. The emergence of these creative initiatives over the past three decades reflects political conditions, particularly related to Knesset (Israeli parliament) and Prime Minister elections, as well as expressions of political dissent and protest. He argues that the analysis of both the visual and textual elements employed by illustrators and art directors reveals insights into the public image of Israeli politicians and the political events depicted.

Finally, philosopher Giorgio Baruchello from the University of Akureyri in Iceland enquires into the relationship of humor with cruelty. His “Does Humor Entail Cruelty?” takes this question to mean: “How does humor have within or as part of itself, or relate closely to, cruelty?” First, Baruchello explains the semantic fluidity of “humor” and “cruelty,” both of which are polysemic family-resemblance terms or cluster concepts, i.e., devoid of any neat list of necessary and sufficient conditions, hence irreducible to any single, univocal definition. Second, he offers nine mutual interlinkages which provide the answer to the starting question: Ordinary cruel humor, blood-related etymologies, laughter-eliciting cruelties, humor in the face of cruelty, the anaesthesia of the heart implied by humorous acts, the institutionalisation of such a Bergsonian cardiac slumber, the implicit cruelty of taking decisions on whether performing humorous acts or not, the cruel responses that failed or unwelcome humorous acts cause, and the cruel irony of silencing humor to avoid all of the preceding potential and actual cruelties. Baruchello’s article points to a four volumes study, undertaken with Icelandic psychologist and neuro-biologist Ársæll M. Arnarsson, *Humour and Cruelty*, which has recently been published (2022–2024) by de Gruyter Series in Philosophy of Humor (edited by Lydia Amir).

Two book reviews conclude this issue. Stuart Dalton from Western Connecticut State University in the United States reviews Dustin Peone, *Making Philosophy Laugh: Humor, Irony, and Folly in Philosophical Thought* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2023). Sammy Basu, from Willamette University in Salem, Oregon, in the United States reviews Villy Tsakona, *Exploring the Sociopragmatics of Online Humor* (Amsterdam, the Netherlands: John Benjamins, 2024).

I sincerely hope that you will find this issue interesting, and enjoy the articles and reviews which it offers.

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