

The Comic Incongruity. A Conversation with Timothy Campbell
edited by Roberto De Gaetano

This conversation investigates the possibility of identifying a productive inconsistency inherent in the concept of the comic self when associated with theoretical frameworks and specific cinematic elements.

The dialogue opens by comparing the idea of “the comic” to what can be termed “tragedy.” In a narrative that adopts a comic approach to reality, subjects often wear masks with no explicit connection to themselves. Furthermore, actions may fail, prompting the emergence of a context that can be understood from a collective viewpoint. Ultimately, the comic act may serve as a significant rupture within a series of cultural mechanisms.

Another pivotal aspect of this conversation is the examination of the divergence between the comic self and our conceptualization of comedy. Campbell asserts that a defining quality of the comic self is its capacity to challenge our relationship with the idea of ownership. This capacity evokes a subjective sensation of dispossession and leads us to view the self as a non-possessive entity.

In conclusion, the authors examine how ostensibly tragic events can be reconceptualized as a possible comic array of circumstances. The authors argue from differing viewpoints that this transformation occurs solely through a process of distancing, aligning with the principles of Henri Bergson and employing the concept of the event as delineated by Carlo Diano.

Joking in a Serious Way: Irony in Movies
Alberto Pezzotta

Filmic irony is a phenomenon that is difficult to delimit and is partially coextensive with comedy and parody. But it can be studied by referring to models of pragmatic linguistics, from irony as “mention” to irony as “pretence”. In order not to find rigid definitions, but to account, each time, for the dynamics of reception and the role played by the context. Studying cinematic irony also allows us to take up, from an interesting perspective, issues related to the theory of enunciation, the aesthetic of reception and the transformations of postmodernism.

Comic Avant-garde: from Futurism to *Entr'acte*
Rossella Catanese

The combination of avant-garde cinema and comedic codes represents an interesting meeting point that features the tendency of some cinematic expe-

riments to explore new narrative and visual forms. The futurist avant-garde movement, which proposes to make a clean slate of the past, repeatedly calls upon the early cinema in the evocation of its own technological and media imagery.

In 1923, René Clair directed *Entr'acte*. Key figures of the coeval Parisian art world appear in absurd comic cameos in the film, including Man Ray, Marcel Duchamp, Jean Borlin, Georges Auric, Picabia, and Clair himself. Through laughter and intellectual provocation, this connection offers a cinematic experience of unexplored artistic possibilities.

Comic Body, Automatic Actor. The ‘Marionettes’ of Petrolini, Totò, Poli Eva Marinai

The contribution investigates the disharmonic qualities of three extraordinary twentieth-century Italian comedians – Petrolini, Totò, Poli – identifying constants and variants of a complicated performative machine that, indebted in a more or less obvious way to the Historical Avant-gardes, distorts the vitality and plasticity of the body. In all these cases, the artifice of the comic mask, understood lato sensu as a ritual/theatrical element and stricto sensu as an actor’s metamorphosis obtained through precise performative techniques, symbolize, according to Bachtin’s assumption, the ‘image of death imbued with life’.

The Ironic Line of Contemporary Art in Italy Gianpaolo Cacciottolo

This paper identifies and analyses some contemporary Italian artistic experiences in which the ironic, sometimes evident, sometimes karstic component seems to participate in a project of subverting fixed structures. A series of aesthetic lines that from the mid-twentieth century to today have operated in the field of contemporary using irony as an operational and characterizing tool. From the experiments of Piero Manzoni and Bruno Munari, through the seventies, until today, irony seems to be a constant in the Italian scenario that besides artists also involves the critical action, for example, of Achille Bonito Oliva.

Will Ferrell’s Demented Cinema. Or What’s Left of Comedy Cinema Bruno Surace

Will Ferrell’s work represents a return to the origins of comic cinema, which had dissipated within the broad boundaries of comedy. Through absurd characters, Ferrell keeps the slapstick tradition alive, incorporating elements of satire. This balance between the immediacy of early comedy and the narrative

sophistication of contemporary comedy makes him one of the few capable of preserving the original essence of early humor in current cinema. The aim of this essay is to articulate the theoretical foundations useful for identifying a specific semantics of Ferrell's comic cinema.

Chase-Burger: The Discomfort of Comedy

Anton Giulio Mancino

Chevy Chase is the broad-spectrum emblem of the phenomenon of American comedy which from *Saturday Night Live* radiated into cinema between the Seventies and Eighties, thanks to the sharing of the typical clumsiness of the average spectator and the reflection of the consumerist and petty-bourgeois universe of American society of those twenty years, extendable to a broad spectrum of collective and Western level. The melancholic resignation of the comic figure played by the mimetic and iridescent Chase, demented and transformative by necessity, eccentric with an unsustainable "normality".

Art of Escape (from Rome). Spaces of the Comic Self in Carlo Verdone's Cinema

Luca Bandirali

In all of his films, Carlo Verdone shows and problematizes the relationship between man, the city of Rome and the wider suburban space. The dialectic of spaces is fundamental in building the structure of his comedies, in which characters struggle between dissatisfaction with the settled condition and the aspiration to escape from Rome. Through the methodologies of geographic aesthetics and geocriticism, this paper highlights the spatial attitudes detectable in Verdone's films, from topophilia to toposhesis; and advances hypotheses about the narrative and thematic function of these attitudes.

The Forms of Comedy

Roberto De Gaetano

In the comedy, life emerges as an invention, removed from the mere execution of action protocols, duties, necessities that mark a destiny. Comedy embraces this freedom and resolves it in the happy ending. Happiness as a haven of freedom, which means that the subject takes charge of his own life in an inventive and creative way, removing it from the idea of destiny. For this reason, what is at stake in an aesthetic form is also what concerns a form of life, and therefore also the social and political dimensions that characterize it. Free aesthetic invention accompanies free political invention.

The Frantumaglia of Checco Zalone

Roy Menarini

The paper intends to investigate the infra-filmic comic forms of Luca Medici, aka Checco Zalone. The distribution on a platform (Netflix, after a passage on Canale 5) of *Amore + IVA*, the Apulian comedian's theatrical show, allows us to construct a reflection on the modalities through which he reinforces, rewrites and closes his comic identity in the spaces between one film and another. We will therefore consider songs, video clips, public occasions, monologues (such as the one for Sanremo 2022), all spurious, semi-textual, hybrid and lateral forms that are little considered in comparison to the big screen successes but help to better explain the original characteristics of Zalone's comedy and the identity mask he represents.

The aesthetics of *Fétiche prestidigitateur*. Between Stop-motion Animation and Comedy

Massimo Bonura

This essay focuses on the short *Fétiche prestidigitateur* (1934, directed by Wladislaw and Irene Starewicz) and it tries to underline what are the nuances of the comic genre about this film. *Fétiche prestidigitateur* has some similarities with American *funny animals*: the gags, animated by stop-motion, underlines some aspects about corporeality and comicality. This essay analyzes the sequences of the film, with an aesthetics-critical methodology, through philosophers like Bachtin (the grotesque) and Propp.

The comedian's Choreographies: Visual Acrobatics and Sound Performance in Jacques Tati's Cinema

Martina Tassone

The purpose of this essay is to speculate on how in Jacques Tati's comedies, movement and gesture, in rhythmic connection with sound, are the primary elements that contribute to the development of the comic message. Tati's universe is in fact a dimension constituted apart from our world (Chion, 1987), because of its acrobatic, imbalanced, and fleeting sound-visual interactions. Moving from the analysis of some of the most significant sequences of Monsieur Hulot's adventures, this essay aims to show that Monsieur Hulot is a half-body who, in order to gain meaning and consistency, freely flows into a sort of modern ballet of the world (Deleuze, 1985).

The Dying Animal: *The Ape Woman* by Marco Ferreri
Emanuele Ingraio

This brief essay aims to investigate Marco Ferreri's relationship with the genre of 'comedy, Italian style' in the first half of the 1960s through the analysis of the film *The Ape Woman* (*La donna scimmia*, 1964), here identified as a text breaking away from the tradition of the cinema of the fathers (such as De Sica, Rossellini, Fellini, Visconti, Antonioni and others) through a personal reworking of the comic plot filtered through the use of the expressive lens of the grotesque, and the adoption of a certain physiological look at the animality of modern subjects.

“In the Immensity”: Parody of the Melodramatic in *Torture Me But Kill Me with Kisses*
Diego Baratto

The essay analyses the strategies through which *Torture Me But Kill Me with Kisses* (Risi, 1968) parodies the popular melodramatic imagery, framing the film in the “populistic” (or proletarian) comedy field and extending the investigation to the variations of the comedic form (especially in relation to the grotesque) in the sociocultural and aesthetic context of the second half of 1960s. Parodic inversions and deformations work on multiple levels within the film: linguistic elaboration (*meloungrammatical*), actor's performance (comic-grotesque mask), intertextual references, visual and narrative constructions.

Bruno Dumont's Tragicomic as a Proto-Political Principle
Mattia Gritti

In the TV diptych about Quinquin and in *Ma Loute*, Bruno Dumont's tragic and Bressonian vision is intertextually shattered by the irruption of the comic. More precisely, the tragic and the comic merge into a tragicomic dimension within which – following Carlo Sini's philosophical perspective – the categories of metaphysics are deeply criticized. The field of this (proto) political battle is the body: no longer opposed to the mind, this space(-time) opens to the appearance of the comic and – above all – to the search for a new *evenemential* beginning.