

The Humorous Times

Newsletter of the International Society for Humor Studies

Fall 2017

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Association News

2017 ISHS Membership and Finances

Martin Lampert, ISHS Secretary-Treasurer



The International Society for Humor Studies had another good year in 2017 with 249 affiliates, including 237 new and returning members and 12 additional Board Members and Consulting Editors of the journal, *HUMOR*. At the October 15 close of 2017 membership, the Society was again financially sound with \$67,614.07 in unaudited revenue including \$50,525.07 carried over from 2016 and \$17,089.00 from 2017 membership dues and fees. Operating expenses for 2017 included \$192.92 for recognition awards, \$492.74 for online services, and \$13,684.00 for membership subscriptions to *HUMOR: International Journal for Humor Research*. Revenue over expenses by the end of 2017 is estimated to be \$53,244.41.

Between December 1, 2016 and October 15, 2017, Holy Names University received an additional \$1,383.35 for the ISHS Scholarship fund. On October 15, the scholarship fund held \$18,542.71. From this fund, the Society made one \$500.00 and two \$250.00 awards in 2017 to graduate students who attended the 29th ISHS Conference in Montreal, Canada. As always, I would like to thank the members who made contributions to the ISHS Scholarship Fund, and I would like to encourage others to make donations with their 2018 membership applications.

We look forward to another great year in 2018 with the publication of the 31st volume of *HUMOR* and the Society's 30th international conference to be held at the University of Tallinn in Tallinn, Estonia, from June 25 to 29, 2018. You can register and submit paper proposals for the 2018 Conference online at the Conference website at <https://www.folklore.ee/ishs2018/>. For Conference information, you can also write to Conference Registration at ishsconference2018@gmail.com. If you would like to host a future ISHS Conference, you can contact me for more information on how to submit a Conference proposal.

If you would like to join the Society or renew your ISHS membership for 2018, please visit the membership page on the Society's website at www.humorstudies.org. On the membership page, you will find a link that will allow you to renew your membership. On the online application form, you will notice the Society's current fee structure, which allows for membership with either a print or online subscription to the Society's journal, *HUMOR*. For 2018, membership is \$110 with a print subscription and \$69 with an online subscription. Please note that online renewal includes a 3% plus \$1 processing fee. However, regular members who renew before January 31, can still take a \$5 discount on dues, allowing everyone to renew early with an online

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Next Issue

The next *The Humorous Times* is due February 2018.

journal subscription for just \$64 plus processing. If you do not wish to receive the journal, but do wish to be a member to receive our other benefits, you can still join ISHS as an Associate member for just \$30 plus processing.

Finally, thank you for your support of the International Society for Humor Studies. Your participation in ISHS helps to advance the importance of humor research and, as always, is greatly appreciated.

2017 ISHS Election

Every two years, the International Society for Humor Studies holds an election for ISHS President and for two new Members-at-Large to the ISHS Executive Board. The new ISHS President will serve for two years, from January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2019, and will take over from Delia Chiaro (University of Bologna, Italy), who will continue on the ISHS Board as the immediate Past President. The new Members-at-Large will replace Goh Abe (Kagawa University, Japan) and Christian Hempelmann (Texas A & M University-Commerce, Texas, USA) who have served on the ISHS Board since January 2014. The new Board Members will serve for four years from January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2021.

For our 2017 Election, the Society is pleased to present the following two candidates for ISHS President and four candidates for ISHS Board Member-at-Large. Online balloting opened on November 15, 2017 and will continue through December 23, 2017.

Candidates for ISHS President



Władysław Chłopicki, Ph.D. (Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland)

Wladyslaw Chlopicki, Ph.D., is a senior lecturer with the Institute of English Studies, Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland, where he has worked since 1988. He is also the Head of the Department of English at Krosno State College in southeastern Poland. He has studied and conducted research in the United States, Germany, Britain, and Denmark. His PhD thesis dealt with sophistication in humor in terms of character frames. He is also interested in translation studies and intercultural communication, and is involved in the international research on communication styles involving a number of European countries.

Wladyslaw is firmly engaged in the cross-cultural and interdisciplinary study of the language of humor. He is working on the application of cognitive linguistics and intercultural communication to the study of humorous texts. He is editor-in-chief of the international *Humour and Culture* series, published in Krakow, which included monographs on *Polish Humour* and *Hungarian Humour*, and will soon yield Czech, Romanian and Bulgarian volumes. He has edited and co-edited several article collections, including *Culture's Software: Communication Styles*, and most recently *Humorous Discourse*, which has just been published by Mouton de Gruyter in the Humour Research series.

Wladyslaw has participated in numerous humour conferences since 1987 (21 ISHS conferences altogether at the latest count, plus any other humour conference he had heard of) and convened the 24th ISHS conference in Kraków in June 2012. He has also co-organized national biannual linguistics conferences in Kraków since 2000, which have drawn scholars from various language, culture and teaching departments across Poland. He has guest lectured in Germany, Portugal, Northern Ireland, Estonia, and Taiwan. He is a member of the editorial team of the *European Journal of Humour Research*. He is also a member of the Editorial Board of *HUMOR*, the *Israeli Journal of Humor Research* and the new Italian *RISU* journal. He is President of the Cracow Tertium Society for the Promotion of Language Studies and served as a Executive Board member of the ISHS from 2006 to 2009.

He strongly believes in the power of interdisciplinary and international dialogue and ground-breaking debate in the study of humour and laughter and in bringing in more, especially young, scholars from across the globe into ISHS.



Patrice Oppliger, Ph.D. (Boston University, Massachusetts, USA)

Patrice Oppliger, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of Mass Communication at Boston University. Her master's thesis investigated the humor of David Letterman and her dissertation focused on sexist humor as sexual harassment. She published "Disgust in humor: Its appeal to adolescents" in *HUMOR: International Journal of Humor Research*. She contributed a chapter on humor and learning to a collection of essays honoring her dissertation chair Dolf Zillmann. She has continued her work on adolescents in her most recent book *Tweencoms: A Look at 25 Years (1991-2016) of female characters in the Disney Channel and Nickelodeon Comedies*. She is currently working on an edited book of essays on the dark side of standup comedy. She regularly reviews submissions for *HUMOR* and has contributed several book reviews. She has been attending ISHS conferences since 1994 and hosted at Boston University in 2011. Her goal is to make newcomers to the organization feel welcome in an effort to pay-it-forward for the kindness and encouragement she has received from members over the past decades. According to Patrice, "It's an honored to be nominated."

Candidates for ISHS Board Member-at-Large



Sammy Basu, Ph.D. (Willamette University, Oregon, USA)

Sammy Basu is a Professor of Politics at Willamette University, a liberal arts college in Salem, Oregon, USA. He teaches courses in the history of western political philosophy, contemporary ethical and political theory, ethics and public policy, death, and humor. He received a B.A. and M.A. in political science from the University of Calgary in Canada, and an M.A. and Ph.D in politics from Princeton University, where he specialized in the study of political philosophy. Humor emerged as a central focus of his research as he recognized that the topic received relatively little disciplinary attention, especially in his field of political philosophy.

Sammy has attended ISHS conferences since 2000 and continues to do so regularly. In his view, the Society distinguishes itself in that it encourages both specialization and synthesis, originality and interdisciplinary sharing of ideas. Over the years, he has learned much from the research of other ISHS members, and presented his own work from a humanities perspective, using the literary and interpretive methods of intellectual history. More specifically, his interests in political humor as theoretical, epistemological, and communicative dimensions of the public sphere have led him to seek new routes through otherwise canonical and well-trodden texts such as Plato's *Republic* and Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. His publications on humor include "Dialogic Ethics and the Virtue of Humor" in the *Journal of Political Philosophy* and "'A little discourse *pro & con*': Levelling laughter and its Puritan criticism," in the *International Review of Social History*. He is working on a book manuscript on humor in the Weimar Republic and Nazi Third Reich.

If elected as a Member-at-Large, Sammy promises to affirm decisions that respect the interdisciplinary and international qualities of the Society, and to support methodological pluralism within humor studies.



Gil Greengross, Ph.D. (Aberystwyth University, Wales, UK)

Gil Greengross is an evolutionary behavioral scientist in the psychology department at Aberystwyth University in Wales. His interdisciplinary research bridges traditional fields of study such as psychology, anthropology, and biology. His studies focus on evolutionary explanations for humor and laughter, mainly in the context of sexual selection and mating. Gil has also investigated the lives and personalities of stand-up comedians, improv artists, humor writers, cartoonists, and other humor professionals. He recently received a grant to study bilingualism and humor.

Gil has been a member of ISHS since 2001 and has been a familiar face at humor conferences since his first ISHS conference in Forli, Italy, in 2002. In 2007, he received one of three Graduate Student Awards at the ISHS conference in Newport, Rhode Island. He regularly teaches a college level class on the psychology of humor, and also delivers public lectures to school students about humor. Gil serves as a consulting editor for the *HUMOR* journal, and is currently guest editing a special issue on sex differences in humor.

Gil works hard to promote public awareness of humor research. He writes a personal blog on the Psychology Today blog system in which he reports on humor studies from diverse academic disciplines, and he was also invited to contribute to The Conversation website to discuss his recent research.



Holger Kersten, Ph.D. (Martin Luther Universität in Halle, Germany)

Holger Kersten is a Full Professor of American Literature and Culture at Martin Luther Universität in Halle, Germany. In 1997, he joined ISHS and since that time has been a frequent presenter of academic papers at ISHS conferences and other scholarly conventions. His research interests in the field of humor include ethnic humor, dialect humor, and national humor. One area of special interest is humor in 19th-century American literature and culture with a long-standing emphasis on Mark Twain. He has been a lecturer at the annual International Summer Schools and Symposia on Humour and Laughter, has served on the Summer School's Advisory Board, and was the local organizer for the 2013 Summer School. He is a member of various national and international academic associations, including the *American Humor Studies Association* and the *Mark Twain Circle of America*. He is a past member of the advisory board of the *German Association for American Studies* and served as its Executive Director. He is currently a member of the editorial board of the journal *Studies in American Humor*.



Will Noonan, Ph.D. (University of Burgundy, Dijon, France)

Will Noonan is a lecturer in English and translation studies at the University of Burgundy in Dijon, France. He has been an active ISHS member since 2011, presenting all but one annual conference since then, and copyedited the journal *HUMOR* from 2012 to 2014. Originally from Australia, he has been a member of the Australasian Humour Studies network since 2007 and academic review panel member since 2010, and is vice-president of the recently created French research group RIRH (Interdisciplinary Network for Humour Research).

Originally trained in French and English literature, his humour-related research interests include the history and theory of humour, reflexivity and metafiction, French/English forms, conceptions and stereotypes of humour, and interdisciplinary humour terminology. Whatever the French university system may say about the matter, he considers humour studies to be his native discipline.

Upcoming Events



30th International Society for Humor Studies Conference

University of Tallinn, Estonia, June 25-29, 2018

The 30th ISHS Conference will take place in Tallinn, Estonia from June 25 to June 29, 2018. The theme of the 2018 Conference will be *Humour: Positively (?) Transforming*, focusing on the creative and contextual aspects of humor. You can now submit presentation proposals and register for the 2018 ISHS Conference online at <https://www.folklore.ee/ishs2018/>. Proposals can be for papers, posters, special panels (including flash presentation panels), and workshops in the areas of humor research. Suggested topic areas include: Cognition and Creativity, Public and Private Discourse, Individuality and Individual Styles, Culture and Diversity, Health and Well-Being, Language and Translation, Media and Digital Technology, and Performance. The deadline for the submission of proposals is March 31, 2018. On or before February 15, early registration fees are 220 Euros for members, 250 Euros for nonmembers, and 100 Euros for students. After February 15, registration fees will be 250 Euros for members, 280 Euros for nonmembers, and 120 Euros for students. For additional questions about the 2018 Conference, please contact the Conference Organizers at ishsconference2018@gmail.com or visit the Conference website at <https://www.folklore.ee/ishs2018/>.

Graduate Student Awards at the 2018 ISHS Conference

ISHS graduate student members, who submit papers to the 30th ISHS Conference can apply for a Graduate Student Award (GSA), the Don and Alleen Nilsen Young Scholars Award (DANYS), and a special award in honor of humor scholar and researcher Christie Davies (CDA). Applicants for all three awards must submit: (1) a letter of interest that indicates for which awards they intend to compete, (2) their curriculum vita, (3) a description of their research program within humor studies, (4) a Conference paper proposal, and (5) all required Conference registration materials and fees. Applicants for the Don and Alleen Nilsen Young Scholars Award and for the Christie Davies Award must additionally submit a completed Conference paper on which they are the sole author. The paper for the DANYS Award can be within any area of humor studies; the paper for the Christie Davies Award must be from the field of social or cultural sciences. The application deadline for all three awards is March 31, 2018, and all applications should be submitted through the Conference website at <https://www.folklore.ce/ishs2018/>.

Additional information on these awards can be found under the ISHS Conference page on the ISHS website at <http://www.humorstudies.org> and on the 2018 Conference website at <https://www.folklore.ce/ishs2018/>.

Twenty-Fourth AHSN Colloquium

Central Queensland University, Cairns Campus, Australia, February 2-4, 2018

The 24th Colloquium of the Australasian Humour Studies Network (AHSN) will be held from February 2 to 4, 2018 at the Central Queensland University, Cairns Campus, Australia. The conveners are Anja Pabel, Jessica Milner Davis, and Bruce Findlay. The conference theme will be *Humour: How does it Travel*. For more information, contact Anja Pabel at a.pabel@cqu.edu.au or visit the AHSN website at <http://www.sydney.edu.au/humourstudies>.

Forty-Fourth Annual Meeting of The Association for the Study of Play

Melbourne, Florida, USA, February 28-March 3, 2018

The 44th Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Play will be held from February 28 to March 3, 2018 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel on the Melbourne Waterfront in Melbourne, Florida. The 2018 TASP Conference's theme will be *Fulfilling the Promise of Play*, and the keynote speaker will be Dr. Peter Grey, author of *Free to Learn: Why Unleashing the instinct to Play will Make our Children Happier, More Self-Reliant, and Better Students for Life*. For more information, contact Walter Drew at drwalterdrew@gmail.com or visit the or visit the TASP website at www.tasplay.org/about-us/conference.

Thirty-First Meeting of the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor

San Diego, California, USA, April 12-15, 2018

The 31st Conference of the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor will be held April 12 to 15, 2018 at the Holiday Inn-Bayside, San Diego, USA. The theme of the 31st AATH Conference will be *Resilience: Harnessing the Power of Humor*. For more information, visit the AATH Conference page at <http://www.aath.org>.

Eighteenth International Summer School and Symposium on Humour and Laughter

University of Wolverhampton, Telford, United Kingdom, July 2-7, 2018

The 18th International Summer School and Symposium on Humour and Laughter will be held at the University of Wolverhampton, Telford, United Kingdom from July 2 to July 7, 2018. Josie Boutonnet and Tracey Platt are the local organizers. For information, visit the summer school website at <http://humoursummerschool.org/18/>.

Gender: Laughter

Reviewed by Lucy K. Rayfield, University of Oxford

Bettina Papenburg (2017). *Gender: Laughter*. Farmington Hills, Michigan: Macmillan Reference. 443 pp. ISBN: 9780028663180

Whilst it is impossible to fully interrogate the intersections between gender, sexuality, and humour, Bettina Papenburg's volume is an excellent place to begin. *Gender: Laughter*, the fourth in the Macmillan Interdisciplinary Handbooks series on gender studies, will no doubt serve as a fundamental guide, not only to scholars of gender and humour theory, but also to the undergraduate seeking to discover how laughter is a force that can both empower minorities and undermine social hierarchies. Each chapter considers these lines of enquiry by means of several key questions which reappear throughout the volume. What does shared laughter mean, and whom does it include and exclude? How can genres such as parody and satire help us re-evaluate our perception of reality? Why is the body important in generating laughter, and what does it problematise? Ultimately, what does laughter reveal about society and its prejudices, and how can humour become a strategy for destabilising these?

Readers will be grateful to hear that these complex and crucial investigations are made accessible and even enjoyable through the volume's instinctive structure and highly readable scholarship. The book is split into five sections, 'Gender and Genre', 'The Carnavalesque and the Grotesque', 'Tonalities of Laughter', 'Performance and Artifice' and 'Materialities', and each division contains four to six chapters by academics representing an impressive variety of disciplines. Rather than moving towards a conclusion, each section approaches these critical themes and the questions they evoke from rich and diverse perspectives, creating vital scope for debate and reflection.

Part One, 'Gender and Genre', examines the role of gender identity in humour and laughter; conversely, it also seeks to determine the importance of humour in gender identity. Opening with Dianna Niebylski's thought-provoking discussion of how laughter has historically been linked to a woman's sexual behaviour, Kathleen Rowe Karlyn then presents the concept of the 'unruly woman', who employs laughter as a defence mechanism or tool for correcting situations found to be unjust. Another focus of this first section is the relation of women to popular culture, and our authors situate them in a variety of comedic genres. Maggie Hennefeld provides a much-needed survey of the neglected comediennes in American silent cinema; and Tarja Laine evaluates laughter as a coping mechanism in what she terms the 'womance' (combining 'woman' and 'romance'), a sub-genre of romantic comedy revolving around close female friendships. Supported by examples and references spanning almost two millennia, we are left to consider how humour can be used by women and minority groups to attack, defend, and subvert.

'The Carnavalesque and the Grotesque' re-evaluates the significance of both concepts, exploring how their comic potential can confront and challenge dominant space. Eleanor Ty's discussion, supplemented by Bakhtin's examination of the benefits of heteroglossia and polyphony in the carnivalesque, is an original and relatable account of the power throughout history of transgressive laughter evoked by the carnivalesque; Kiene Brillenburg Wurth, through a close analysis of Heide Hatry's *Skin Room* (2006), evaluates how the grotesque can embody the fragility between life and death. The following chapters in this cluster focus on contemporary feminist art and radio comedy, asking how humour--catachresis in radio, for example--helps us reform our vision of reality. Katell Lavéant's closing chapter turns back to the medieval and Renaissance eras, with an engaging and thoughtful study into how joyful culture can unearth female voices and establish how they asserted their dominance.

The next cluster, 'Tonalities of Laughter', turns to an essential discussion of gendered laughter. Each chapter analyses this critical concept in relation to minority or differentiated groups; they focus, for instance, on age, race, sexuality, and religion. Mireille Rosello considers how laughter is, by nature, already gendered and racialized; she posits also that the queer postmigrant can use humour to expose and elude conflict, whilst Lara Cox uses Zoulikha Bouabdellah's art installation *Silence* to examine how and why Islamic feminist satire can be employed as a tool to empower and implement social tolerance. Carole Roy determines how successfully visual and corporeal humour can destabilise stereotypes of the 'older woman', whilst the final

chapters in this section re-evaluate the notion of masculinity in today's comic media and the diminishing social effects of the so-called 'humourless lesbian'.

The final two parts of this volume, 'Performance and Artifice' and 'Materialities', move firstly to consider the subversive potential of performance, such as camp and drag; the focus then turns to the intricate and inevitable connection between laughter and the body. Kinohi Nishikawa explores how black women have used masquerade to re-address and confront intersectional oppression, and whilst Nicholas de Villiers investigates the importance of being able to laugh at oneself in drag, Eva von Redecker assesses the force of gender parody for those who are not part of dominant culture. Taking a look at the links between materiality and humour, Katariina Kyrölä provides an innovative study into the significance of bodily excess in comedy, and Susanne Hamscha explores the differences between laughter evoked by disabled comedians and disabling humour, re-evaluating the implications of both. Their positions provide a subtle change in direction, also connecting this theme of corporeality with other volumes in this Macmillan series.

Whilst the series preface acknowledges that *Gender: Laughter* cannot be comprehensive, by virtue of the questions it seeks to answer and the concepts it aims to re-assess, this book is a crucial introduction to and continuation of increasingly pressing issues and questions. Highlighting the relevance and potential of gender, sexuality, and humour studies, it is also an invitation for new areas to be explored and further research to be undertaken. General readers will find this volume informative, thought-provoking, and engaging, while for scholars of gender and humour theory, it is both an exciting and essential read.

Three Books on Clowns and Clowning

Reviewed by Louise Peacock, University of Southern California

David Carlyon (2016). *The education of a circus clown: Mentors, audiences, mistakes*. New York, USA: Palgrave Macmillan. xv, 219 pp. ISBN: 9781137554819

Jon Davison (2015). *Clown training: A practical guide*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 192 pp. ISBN: 9781137387578

Benjamin Radford (2016). *Bad clowns*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. 200 pp. ISBN: 9780826356673

Clowns, as cultural icons and as performers across a range of media, have been increasingly a point of interest for the media and the general public in recent months, provoked in part by the recent spate of so-called 'killer clowns' in Europe, Australia, Canada, and the USA. Clowns typically polarize opinion. Individuals tend to love or hate clowns, and some go so far as to fear them. It is rare to find anyone who is neutral about clowns. Given this ability on the part of clowns to generate strong feelings it is hardly surprising that publications focusing on clowns have increased in number in the last decade. The three books considered in this review each take a very different approach to the topic of clowns and clowning.

David Carlyon's book *The Education of a Circus Clown* offers an autobiographical insight into his training as a circus clown and his subsequent time as a circus clown. Jon Davison's *Clown Training: A Practical Guide* draws on his own experience as a student and teacher of clowning to present a practical method for developing a clown and for devising clown theatre. The final book covered in this review, Benjamin Radford's *Bad Clowns*, takes a very different approach. Radford explores the prevalence of what he defines as 'bad clowns' across a range of media.

Carlyon's book offers an autoethnographic examination of his experiences as a trainee at Ringling's Clown College in 1976 and as a new clown touring America with Ringling's blue unit in 1977. The book is predominantly a personal history that reflects on Carlyon's indecision around whether to become a lawyer or a clown before moving on to provide a detailed account of his life as a circus clown. Interlaced with Carlyon's reflections on his personal life and personal process are comments which reveal key elements of clown training and clowning for an audience and which overlap with comments in Davison's book (reviewed next).

The first chapter deals, briefly, with Carlyon's experience of the now defunct Ringling's Clown College. Readers might hope for more detail in this section of the book, for whilst it gives a strong sense of the individuals Carlyon was training alongside and being trained by, it does not provide much detail about the way his training was delivered. Instead Carlyon moves rapidly through the eight-week training course in eighteen pages. It would have been interesting to read more detail on the various elements of training

that he touches on such as make-up, learning existing clown bits, clown history, juggling, acting, dance, and costume classes.

From Chapter 2 onwards each chapter deals with a period of one or two months offering a more detailed reflection on Carlyon's experiences on the road and in the circus ring. Whilst the book claims to focus on the experience of being a circus clown the focus is not so tight as to preclude other aspects of living and working in a circus. This, perhaps, is part of the book's charm: it encourages the reader to understand the circus through the eyes of the clown; to see it not only as a set of acts but as a microcosm of talents, personalities, and individuals that come together to create the touring circus world.

There are times when Carlyon's autoethnographic approach leads to an over-sharing of personal information which is, at best, tangentially relevant to his clowning experience. For example, a strong strand of the narrative focuses on Carlyon's inability to develop and sustain a relationship with any of the circus girls. However, when Carlyon reflects on his experiences as a clown he offers interesting insights into the way in which clowning works. Chapter 4 highlights the importance of structure to a good clown gag and Chapter 5 provides an explanation of the importance of being yourself in clowning to enable the clown to connect with the audience as an equal.

This book is at its best when Carlyon provides a detailed account of how a particular gag was developed and performed with reflections on exactly how and why the gag was successful. One particularly successful example of this can be found in Chapter 9. Here Carlyon recounts how he worked by challenging expectations so that his audience had to become co-conspirators. He explains in detail how a gag in which he appears unable to play his trumpet developed in response to the prompts he was given by the audience. He also draws interesting comparisons with traditional improvisation, suggesting that the collaboration between himself and his audience created a democratic process.

Also important is the material provided in Appendix B where Carlyon provides a brief but vital history of clowning with a clear emphasis on circus clowns. The reader will be enlightened by the clarity of Carlyon's tracing of clown history. Images are particularly well-used in this appendix to illustrate the nature of the clowns discussed.

Carlyon suggests that clowning thrives on apprenticeship, with newer clowns learning from those who are more experienced. One point that Chapter 1 makes clear is that the clown college classes were taught by Ringling clowns who were taking a break from performing in order to teach the class. New clowns were, therefore, taught by experts, and the final chapter stresses the importance of this apprenticeship system to clowning. Carlyon's book was published nineteen years after the Ringling Clown College closed and less than a year before the announcement that Ringling Bros. Barnum and Bailey will close for good in May 2017. In a world with fewer circus clowns to pass on the traditions, Carlyon's book is an important record of how circus clowns were once trained.

Davison's *Clown Training* is a book of two parts. Part One comprises of four chapters on clown training whilst Part Two (again four chapters) focuses on devising clown material. The first three chapters explore areas which will be familiar to any student or scholar of clowning: Play and Pleasure, Clown and Audience, and Clown Dynamics. The section is rounded off by an epilogue which looks at the significance of red noses and hats in clown performance. Part Two explores structure, making shows, and the nature of wrongness in clown performance. This part also ends with an epilogue, this time focused on what the reader of the book might do next.

In the broadest sense this book is, as its title suggests, a training manual. Readers might expect to flick through its pages to find exercises which will introduce them to the world of clowning. To some extent the book follows through on this promise but it is more than a straightforward training guide. Davison seeks to give some sense of his own practice and his own philosophy of clowning in his explanations of the exercises and their purpose. He acknowledges in the introduction that many of the exercises he describes are already in circulation and that each exercise becomes slightly different in the hands of different teachers. However, his insistence on his own praxis may be a problem for readers whose views on clowning do not coincide with his. This is not a text which sets out exercises in terms of simple instructions (as readers may already be familiar with from Simon's *The Art of Clowning*); instead Davison's style is more discursive as he attempts to represent the tone of his own teaching.

Chapter 1, *Play and Pleasure*, introduces a range of simple exercises which many will identify as warm-ups (a term which Davison resists). Each exercise is explained and contextualized so that readers can experiment with the exercise if they choose. Each of the exercises is intended to generate a sense of pleasure in the participant, which Davison asserts is a central feature of clowning. In Chapter 2 the focus shifts to exploring exercises that foreground the nature of the relationship between the clown and the audience. Many of the exercises included here are familiar children's games, but with a distinctive focus on playing for the audience rather than simply playing for the sake of playing. The third chapter explores what Davison calls "clown dynamics," but this is one of the points in the book where the reader might wish for greater clarity from the author in defining key terms. Instead readers must work out for themselves what Davison means by the term 'dynamics' by reading through the exercises and seeing what they lead to. This chapter reveals the hand of more well-established clown tutors (particularly Gaulier, as Davison acknowledges) whose terminology and exercises are central to the chapter. Although the fourth chapter is titled as an epilogue it continues to offer some exercises, this time intertwined with Davison's thoughts on hats and noses.

The second half of the book focuses on strategies for making clown shows, and Davison pays some attention to how to devise material and some to bringing existing entrées to life. This section of the book is less clear in following through on its declared intentions. Davison's own process is strongly, even insistently, articulated but, given the caveats in the first half of the book about material shifting in the hands of different clowns or different teachers, it is not always immediately clear what other performers or teachers might adopt from Davison's approach. Overall the book is an interesting account of Davison's process, but as a result it is more a philosophy of clowning than a practical guide to clowning.

Radford's *Bad clowns* explores the history of bad clowns, seeking to discover why clowns go bad and why some people fear them so intensely. The book reveals an impressive range of research, extending as it does across bad clowns in print, on screen, in music, and in real life.

As he acknowledges in his introduction, Radford's definition of clown is a broad one, which may be problematic for some readers. In the first half of the book, the clowns considered are fictional incarnations found in comics, novels, films and other types of performance, whereas in the second half Radford offers a consideration of a range of settings in which real people adopt clown outfits to aid their varied wrongdoings. Inevitably this combination means that very unlike clowns are treated in very similar, ultimately unsatisfying, ways.

The brief opening chapter offers a very short history of clowning making loose connections between clowning, *Commedia dell'Arte*, and Mr. Punch, who is the focus of the second chapter. This chapter articulates Mr. Punch's violent nature but does not fully justify his inclusion as a clown or address the fact that this clown, if he is to be considered as such, is a puppet rather than a human being. In chapter 3, perhaps the most interesting chapter in the book, Radford grapples with the fascinating and difficult question of why bad clowns are so compelling and so ubiquitous. He draws on an interesting range of research here, but ultimately he is not able to move far beyond the idea that the ambiguity of the clown is in some way unsettling.

From Chapter 4 onwards Radford's discussion of bad clowns seems to lose some of its focus. Though the research is still apparent in the sheer range of examples cited, there is less and less focus on building any thesis as to why bad clowns may be so popular as a cultural icon. For example, Radford discusses hospital clowns as "straddling the line between good and bad" (p. 38) without ever clarifying how they might be viewed as bad.

The focus of Chapter 5 is what Radford defines as "Clowns of the Ink," which turn out to be clowns in comic books, magazines, and graphic novels. This chapter is the first of a series of chapters that offers a list of occurrences of bad clowns in different media. Chapters 6 and 7 take the reader on a tour of clowns on screen and in song. In Chapters 8, 9 and 10, despite Radford's earlier claim that "real clowns ... are barely represented here" (p. 3), the focus shifts away from clowns in fictional and creative settings to the ways in which the icon of the clown has been appropriated for use in pornography and sex acts, in criminal settings, and in activism. The final three chapters also deal with what Radford calls real clowns: fairground dip clowns (clowns that are plunged into water by customers throwing balls at a target to dunk them), phantom clowns (those reported as preying on children but never located by law enforcement), and online trolls. The final chapter with its focus on trolls as digital clowns highlights what is, for me, the central difficulty of the book which is that Radford never makes a clear enough distinction between those who adopt clown make-up and

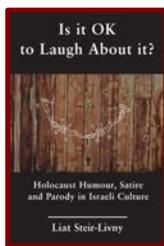
outfits but are not clowns in behaviour or character and those who occupy a clown persona for performative purposes, truly inhabiting a clown character. Many readers will find themselves doubting that every kind of clown listed by Radford is, in fact, properly a clown. The truly interesting question, which Radford does not fully address, is just why the appearance of clown is so popular with those who wish to associate it with wrongdoing whether in fiction or in life.

Taken together these three books consider a wide range of clown practice, engaging the reader in an exploration of how one might become a clown for the circus or theatre and provoking the reader to ponder just what they understand the term clown to mean.

Reference

Eli, Simon. (2009). *The Art of Clowning*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Recent Publications



Is It O.K. to Laugh about It? Holocaust Humour, Satire, and Parody in Israel

Liat Steir-Livny. (2017). *Is it O.K. to laugh about it: Holocaust humour, satire, and parody in Israel*. Herts, UK: Vallentine Mitchell. 208 pp. ISBN-13: 978-1910383353

From Rabbi Rachel Esserman, The Reporter, Jewish Federation of Greater Binghamton:

Often, Holocaust humour is perceived as part of a dangerous process that normalizes Nazism and Hitler. In opposition to these ideas, author Steir-Livny claims that in Israel, a unique post-traumatic society where the trauma lives as an integral part of the present, Holocaust humour in Hebrew functions as an important defense mechanism. The book argues that Holocaust humour, satire, and parody rebel against the way this trauma affects Israeli society in the present by challenging and deconstructing the fear. *Is It Ok to Laugh About It?* shows that paradoxically, Holocaust humour also strengthens the dominance of the trauma in the present by inserting it even more into everyday life and popular culture. Thus, Holocaust humour, satire, and parody in Israel are a double-edged sword: on the one hand, they function as an attempt to fight the acting out of the trauma in Israeli society but, on the other, they strengthen certain elements of it. There is a contradictory process of dissociation and assimilation occurring at the same time, which attests to the dominance of the trauma in the Jewish-Israelis' identity. This innovative and intriguing analysis will challenge the borders of Holocaust research and commemoration.



Humor and Chinese Culture: A Psychological Perspective

Xiaodong Yue, Ed. (2017). *Humor and Chinese culture: A psychological perspective*. New York, USA: Routledge, 216 pp., ISBN: 978-1138220621; EISBN: 978-1315412450

From the Publisher: This book addresses psychological studies of humor in Chinese societies. It starts by reviewing how the concept of humor evolves in Chinese history, and how it is perceived by Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism respectively. It then compares differences in the Western and the Chinese perceptions of humor and discusses empirical

studies that were conducted to examine such differences. It also discusses the cultural origin and empirical evidence of the Chinese ambivalence about humor and presents empirical findings that illustrate its existence. Having done these, it proceeds to discuss psychological studies that examine how humor is related to various demographic, dispositional variables as well as how humor is related to creativity in Chinese societies. It also discusses how humor is related to emotional expressions and mental health in Chinese society as well. It concludes with a discussion on how workplace humor is reflected and developed in Chinese contexts. Taken together, this book attempts to bring together the theoretical propositions, empirical studies, and cultural analyses of humor in Chinese societies.



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