

Clowns and gender play

Clowns

1. Clowns have varied traditions particularly focusing on costume and performance
2. The most recognisable modern clown character is the Auguste or red clown type, With outlandish costumes, distinctive makeup, colourful wigs, exaggerated footwear, colourful clothing
3. they are strongly associated with the circus clown which developed out of earlier comedic roles in the theatre in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The fool

1. The role that clowns perform is the role of a fool whose everyday actions and tasks become extraordinary Or for whom the ridiculous becomes ordinary
2. Some clown characters are involved in a religious or ritual capacity – ritual clown

Early clowns

1. The most ancient clowns have been found in the fifth dynasty of Egypt around 2400 BC
2. Unlike court jesters, they have served socio-religious and psychological roles And traditionally the roles of priest and clown have been held by the same person

Bodies

1. Clowns tend to mask, deform or blur the natural features of their faces and bodies
2. Instead of enhancing physical attractiveness they construct psychological and social characters beyond the scope of sex and gender
3. Although the exaggeration of the width of shoulders brings about some traditional male stereotypes, but often sex and gender are prominent themes in clown acts

Images of desire

1. The meaning produced by individual clown acts depends on the discourse of the programme
2. Clown Acts tend to have a referential frame that may be an institution, a stereotypic situation or normative social behaviour characteristic of the societies where they perform
3. The deeper cultural constraints they address often allude to the tacit rules that govern cultures such as desire and gender (heterosexual matrix)

Incompatibility formula

1. The recipe for producing laughter by performing implicit or explicitly transgressive sexual conjunctions is used in some acts

2. They offer scorn of the public for a prohibited union across an age gap and social status gap.
3. Sex and gender used to create humour by creating unexpected outcomes that disclose hidden truths

Classic clown repertory

1. The act performed in France by clowns – Bocky and Randel is well known.
2. The narrative involves two characters who keep a whistle in either mouths, through which they produce sounds mimicking the intonations of verbal utterances
3. The accompanying postures and gestures complement the whistled dialogue and ensure that the audience deciphers the meaning of the speechless statements

The clowns

1. It is called the nightingales - and features the male bird on top of the ring broadcasting readiness to mate And the other clown enters the ring in drag with a handbag and feathery headgear
2. The first clown starts to court and the second turns away in a sign of indifference. The courting happens by showing muscles, holding a bunch of flowers and putting right knee down
3. The second clown in drag then throws the flowers away. The first clown gives up –and looks for another mate at which point the one in drag accepts a piece of jewellery

Decoding

1. The act makes explicit the sociobiological process of mating and its relation to the institution of marriage and highlights the contextual culture – where traditional view of modern western societies is reciprocal romantic love is the grounds for recognised union of a man and woman.
2. Instead the actual birds that made = the choice of mating rests with the female who assess the male - The male vies to attract the female's attention
3. In the clown act it is only when the clown produces real money that she agrees to mate

Gender play

1. Cross-dressing is a source of humour in as much as there is a marked discrepancy between the appearance of the male character and the result of his transvestism
2. Contrary to the case of the Kabuki Theatre in Japan – where some male performers master the local feminine code of makeup, garments and social behaviour In a manner that exceeds their models in perfection

3. It is a way of foregrounding also the artificiality of gender by dissociating the components of cultural demeanours from the individuals producing them.

Transvestism

1. For Kabuki actors, transvestism consists of creating a flawless image, an icon of an actress
2. It highlights the arbitrariness of gendered behaviour

The ballerina on a horse

1. Well defined gestures and their accessories are extracted from their usual context and recombined within different frames by clowns
2. This drastically subverts that gender distinctions that are naturalised in cultural codes
3. What is perceived as an essential natural property is revealed as a floating sign that can be appropriated by others
4. Culturally learned gender behaviours can be transferred across the sexes
5. They explode the ideological pretence of these codes
6. The laughter they elicit though contributes to reinforcing these cultural norms
7. The ambiguity of the clowns toys with the fundamentals of culture and undermines the consistency of the rules, but reasserts the power of those norms and rules.