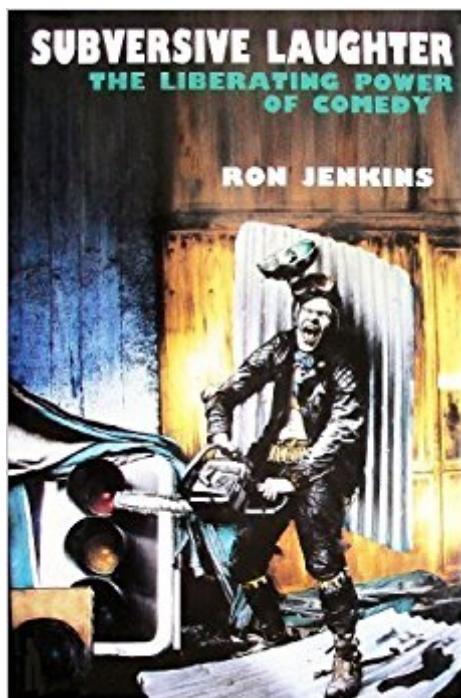


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Subversive Laughter: The Liberating Power Of Comedy



Synopsis

From Charlie Chaplin's parody of the great dictator to Richard Pryor's demysticism of racism, the funniest, noblest comedy has always been rooted in hostility to oppression. Now Ron Jenkins shows how comics around the world use their art to combat political and social tyranny in everyday life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is one of those books in which the parts are greater than the whole. Many of the chapters, separately considered (which is the way some of them have been published), are quite intriguing and full of suggestive thought. Jenkins (performing arts, Emerson Coll.) maintains that the relief of laughter is a physiological necessity when people are experiencing any kind of oppression. He bases his conclusions on observations made while traveling in Indonesia, Lithuania, South Africa, Italy, and Japan and while living in the United States. The book is energetic, but the impression is inescapable that Jenkins had a lot of random material lying about and decided to knock it together between covers. For specialized humor collections. A.J. Anderson, GSLIS, Simmons Coll., Boston

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Writer, director, and clown--a graduate of the Ringling Brothers College for Clowns, no less--Jenkins contends that comedy can do more than amuse and divert. In the right hands, it can be a powerful force for freedom. Drawing from his own extensive professional experience--Jenkins has worked with Italian farceur Dario Fo and the sacred clowns of Bali--Jenkins crafts seven essays examining

the myriad uses of comedy throughout the world to liberate people politically and psychologically from oppressive conditions; in Japan, for instance, the popular, cross-dressing taishu engeki provide an important societal release by mocking rigid, conformist Japanese culture. Based on articles originally published in newspapers and magazines, these writings often feel more like padded-out features than tight little essays, but even the most digressive pieces are interesting, and the strongest stuff--most notably Jenkins' searing study of American comedy and the way the mass media defangs our most biting comic wits--is intelligent and fascinating. Jack Helbig

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