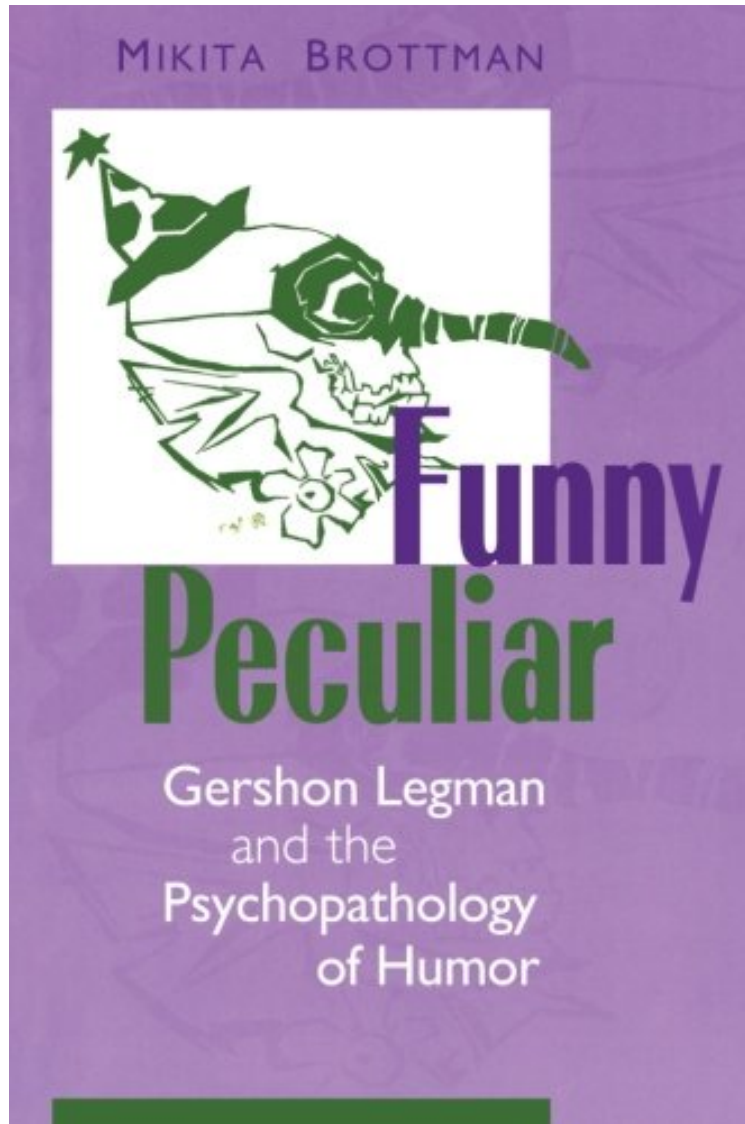


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Funny Peculiar: Gershon Legman and the Psychopathology of Humor

Mikita Brottman

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Mikita Brottman : Funny Peculiar: Gershon Legman and the Psychopathology of Humor before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Funny Peculiar: Gershon Legman and the Psychopathology of Humor:

9 of 15 people found the following review helpful. Funny but Serious! By A Customer This is a really great book, funny but serious as well. The first part is all about Legman, an eccentric collector of dirty jokes. The rest is about

laughter and humor, and why people find things funny. It's not really a light hearted book, it might make you think carefully before you laugh, or tell a joke, but that's what's so interesting about it. The author doesn't take anything for granted and looks at everything from a perspective I've never seen before. Recommended for all smart people.

Why are jokes funny? Why do we laugh? In *Funny Peculiar*, Mikita Brottman demurs from recent scholarship that takes laughter-- and the broader domain of humor and the comical--as a liberating social force and an endearing aspect of self-expression. For Brottman, there is nothing funny about laughter, which is less connected to mirth and feelings of good will than to a nexus of darker emotions: fear, aggression, shame, anxiety. Brottman rethinks not only the mechanisms of humor but also the relation of humor to the body and the senses. To this end, she provides an engrossing account of the life and work of Gershon Legman, exiled author, publisher, and sexologist, Alfred Kinsey's first bibliographer, and legendary compiler of the dirty joke. Like Freud, Legman was convinced of the impossibility of understanding humor apart from sex, and Brottman shows how his two massive works on the subject, *Rationale of the Dirty Joke* and *No Laughing Matter*, provide a framework for understanding the ambivalent and often hostile impulses that underlie the comic impulse in its various guises. In lively and enlivening chapters, she traverses dirty jokes, the figure of the "evil clown" in popular culture, the current popularity of "humor therapy," changing fashions in stand-up comedy, and the connection between humor and horror. Brottman's sparkling prose, laced with wit, does not obscure the seriousness of *Funny Peculiar*. It is a thoughtful and wide-ranging elaboration of the Freudian claim that joking, in point of fact, is no laughing matter.

"*Funny Peculiar* is an intelligent, integrative study of the various forms and functions of humor. Brottman explores her topic through a series of essays on the comic world of laughter, jokes, clowns, comedians, and humor therapists, all of which are examined for their serious, decidedly unfunny psychological underpinnings. Deftly written in beautifully jargon-free prose, often wry and bitingly humorous, *Funny Peculiar* goes to the heart of comedy, using the underappreciated work of the eccentric, self-taught Freudian scholar Gershon Legman as one of several lenses for examining the psychology of humor. Brottman's critique of humor therapists is especially incisive and--dare I say? - humorous. Her book is a pleasure." - Susan B. Miller, Ph.D., Author, *Disgust* (Analytic Press, 2004) "In these complex and violent times, how anxiously we try to lighten up," clinging to a good laugh as the one simple thing that doesn't mean anything but feeling good. But it is by looking the joker straight in the eye that Brottman is able to uncover a more believably complex sense of our very human relationship with humor. She treads a sometimes hilarious but always serious line between objective and subjective, personal and sociocultural, caustic and considerate. Read on: Brottman is not asking you to check your sense of humor at the door. You will laugh reading this book - even as you gain a healthier suspicion of why you are laughing, indeed, of why you ever laugh." - A. Loudermilk, Author, *The Daughterliest Son* About the Author Mikita Brottman, Ph.D., who earned her doctorate at Oxford University, is Professor of Language and Literature at the Maryland Institute College of Art and a candidate at the Washington Square Institute for Psychotherapy and Mental Health (NYC). She writes regularly for mainstream and alternative publications and is the author of three books on the horror film.