

Touch

Skin, 2006

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- lectured at Skyline last term



Touch – not a single sense

Different nerve receptor for each type

- Light touch
- Constant pressure
- Deep pressure & vibrations
- Temperature
 - Warmth
 - extremes
- Pain

Optimization?

- (smell → perfume, scent)
- (taste → excellent food)
- (hearing → music) etc.

TOUCH

- massage, sex (Ackermann)

HOW ABOUT . . .

Touching pleasures

- *clothing, fabric (sheets, towels)*

- *Eco*

- *tools (grips, paper, pens, keyboards . . .)*

- *texture in art - actual or implied*
 - *Texture; Rodin*



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PAIN

The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World, Elaine Scarry, 1987

Scarry begins with the fact of pain's inexpressibility. Not only is physical pain enormously difficult to describe in words--confronted with it, Virginia Woolf once noted, "language runs dry"--it also actively destroys language, reducing sufferers in the most extreme instances to an inarticulate state of cries and moans. Scarry analyzes the political ramifications of deliberately inflicted pain, specifically in the cases of torture and warfare

(amazon.com blurb)

PAIN & Humor

- Why is slapstick – pain in other people – funny?
- A theory of humor: frame shifting
 - Arthur Koestler, described and updated in *How The Mind Works*, 1997, Steven Pinker

Incongruity, resolution and indignity

A train of thought in one frame of reference bumps up against an anomaly: an event or statement that makes no sense in the context of what has come before. The anomaly can be resolved by shifting to a different frame of reference, one in which the event does make sense. And within *that* frame, someone's dignity has been downgraded.

Pinker especially sees humor in an evolutionary context of competition for power and status. The powerful mock the weak; the weak *collectively* mock the powerful (thus the 'contagious' nature of laughter).

Physical humor

Slapstick humor runs off the clash between a psychological frame, in which a person is a locus of beliefs and desires, and the physical frame, in which a person is a hunk of matter of obeying the laws of physics.

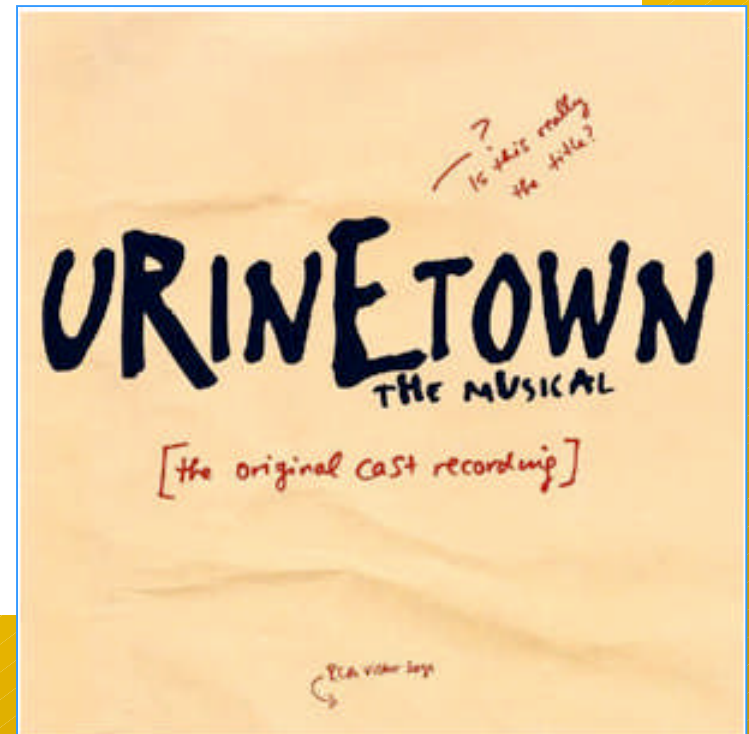
Monty Python

“Make ‘em Laugh”



Why are fart jokes funny?

Scatological humor runs off the clash between the psychological frame and a physiological frame, in which a person is a manufacturer of disgusting substances.



Sexual humor also runs off a clash between the psychological frame and a biological one; this time the person is a mammal with all the instincts and organs necessary for internal fertilization.

Verbal humor (puns)

Verbal humor hinges on the clash between two meanings of one word, the second one unexpected, sensible, and insulting.

Do all puns fit into Pinker's competition-based worldview?

Why do people hiss and groan at puns?

Constant punning is a possible symptom of schizophrenia.

A threat to language and human meaning? (An epistemological threat?)

- Out of touch with the subject?