Carry On Conferencing

Carry On films seem to have enjoyed a resurgence of interest lately, what with documentaries, West End plays and a plethora of websites forming a legacy to that bawdy, tawdry slice of very British humour. Andy Medhurst, senior lecturer in Media Studies, has been quick to rise to the social and sexual significance of the Carry On series, in a way which would have Sid James guffawing.

Andy is to host a ‘ Carry On Conference’ which will examine the role of the films as social and cultural artefacts. The conference, due to take place at the National Film Theatre on February 27, is part of the NFT’s Carry On season and complements an exhibition at the Museum of the Moving Image.

Andy is hoping to avoid the tone of slavish devotion displayed by what he refers to as “ Carry On Trekkies”, who may have adopted a love for the series as an ‘ ironic’ gesture (or, even worse, may not be ‘ ironic’ about their uncritical devotion to the films...). He will cast a critical eye on the series - as he is keen to stress: “The films are important and interesting, but they aren’t perfect. Even the very good films have boring stretches. It is what they say about social history which makes them really interesting.”

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As he points out, “Comedy is a good barometer - if you want to find out what a culture thinks about itself, look at what it laughs at.”

Precisely because of their lack of pretension, the Carry On films allow a unique insight into attitudes towards sex and social status, as well as encapsulating something uniquely British. It may be tempting to make a psychoanalytic reading of the series, with its peculiarly infantile obsession with sex, but Andy is keen to move away from the Freudian interpretation of comedy: “Most studies of comedy are concerned with the mechanics of humour rather than the social and historical context. The strength of these films is that by not setting out to make social points, the films make them more clearly. They end up being quite instructive because they bring into sharp focus attitudes we take for granted.”

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A Quota on Quoting

Alan Sinfield throws down the gauntlet to the Hughes estate
Biographers often clash with angry relatives over controversial depictions of their subjects. But the relatives of Ted Hughes are perhaps the most notorious for the tight reign they keep on his estate. The quotation of Plath's poetry has been a particular bone of contention as the turbulent nature of her relationship with Hughes, and her suicide, have acquired an element of iconic mythology which is at odds with the personal memories of the family.

The estate has clashed with academics who published controversial material before. A legal battle flared up in the late 1980s when Sussex academic Jacqueline Rose made inferences about lesbian nuances in one of Plath's poems. Owlyn Hughes, Ted's sister, granted permission for Plath's poetry to be quoted, but later tried to revoke it.

The situation is now set to erupt again, as the publication of Hughes' celebrated Birthday Letters, along with his recent death, has led to a spate of academic interest. Responsibility for the estate has now gone to the daughters of Hughes and Plath, and according to Alan Sinfield, professor in EAM, "There is now a much stronger attempt at protection, either of their parents' reputation or their own feelings. They are keen to avoid any mention at all of Plath's suicide, and have become even more austere in what they will allow to be published."

Alan, editor of the influential journal Textual Practice, has challenged the Hughes estate to defend their record of restriction. When a paper which had been accepted for publication in Textual Practice was refused the right to quote any poetry from Birthday Letters, Alan decided to take on the estate's dictatorship. The paper was, according to him, "highly sympathetic" to Hughes and Plath's relationship. As he stresses, however, this is not the point: "Hughes didn't have to publish his poems. If he didn't want them to enter the public domain, he should have left them in a drawer. These were people with a knack for words and their version of things ring in your ears - that's what poems are supposed to do, and that is why their words need to be heard. And is it slander to say that someone was horrid to their wife? We can't let academic work be completely dictated by what the family want to be remembered."

Alan has called for Hughes' publishers, Faber, to set up a round-table meeting between senior academics and representatives of the family. As he points out, academics may begin to disregard the family completely in their bid to publish their views unfeathered. He acknowledges that such a thorny issue could end up causing a legal battle, but he relishes the opportunity to bring the debate into the public domain - which is where the poems themselves belong.
One step at a time

When Ray de Witt saw the advert for a spiral staircase displayed on the back page of the Bulletin, he immediately thought of his friend’s recent advice on home furnishings. This friend suggested to Ray, who had just moved here from London to take up a post in the Sussex Language Institute and was in the process of buying a new flat, that he bought one item andBased the rest of the flat around it. As a result, Ray is now the proud owner of a spiral staircase, but unfortunately he has not yet bought the flat. The staircase once connected Arts B117 and B217 and was sold by the University to Ray for £175. However, it is rather large and cumbersome, so Rob French (Building and Services Division) who has been organising the sale, has suggested to Ray that he take it away ‘one step at a time’. If anyone has a flat for sale (in the Hove area) to fit around his staircase, Ray would be very grateful to hear from them.

Dear Bulletin

It is sad that the Bulletin can print something as ill-formed as the headline ‘International Wife’s Group’. The Information Office should encourage accurate use of language along with the rest of the University. It seems a particular shame to make this error in an item about a group which aims to improve the English of its members. The title also suggests that the group only welcomes the partners of married male students. Is this deliberate? Is it desirable?

David Young
COGS

Letters

Dear Bulletin

It is hardly surprising that local people do not normally consider the University as ‘their’ place when university people do not even know the name of their local district (Educational equality unit ushers in the learning age, Bulletin, 15 January). The pronunciation MOULScomb (as in your spelling) is the mark of the outsider, particularly those from the university. By contrast, locals know it as ‘MoulseCOOMB’.

Yours faithfully
J. Richards
Undergraduate - SOC

Carry On Conferencing

Continued from front page

As well as their concern with sex - the films are, according to Andy, ‘a potted history of sexual hang-ups.’ They display a consistent distrust for and lampooning of authority. They therefore form a canvas on which social anxieties and fantasies can be played out and displayed. The series continues this ambivalent relationship with the social status quo with its many pastiches of British history, and of other film genres, as well as parodies of contemporary British politics. This parody is never more clear than in the lambasting of British imperialism in Carry On Up The Khyber, which was being made when Enoch Powell made his ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech. The emphasis on pastiche, as well as the cross-gendered stereotypes played by Hattie Jacques and Charles Hawtrey, and the self-conscious sense of play in attitudes to sex all suggest that the Carry On series can also be seen as a celebration of the politics of camp humour.

The Carry On series may be claimed by some as a champion of ‘queer’ politics, but Andy feels that the series is deeply rooted in the conservative world of 1960s Britain. Not only do the characters spend far more time talking about sex than they spend actually having it, nothing in the films can be said to be innovative. As Andy points out, ‘The Carry On films have never been surprising - they are more like a comfy old sofa than a modernist chair. But comedy depends on celebrating the familiar. And you always know what you are getting with a Carry On film - watching them is like the cinematic equivalent of eating fish and chips.

‘Ten years ago you couldn’t get anyone interested in these films. Now they have become a ‘cult’ commodity - everyone is running around saying they are the best thing that’s ever been made,” says Andy. In an attempt to recapture the series from its cult groupies and cast a critical eye on the social and cultural role of the films, Andy is leading the film on a cultural and educational journey of their own as they Carry On.... Into The Academic Annals.

Research Funding Opportunities

This is a selection of Research Opportunities. More details of these and other opportunities are available from the Research Grants and Contracts Office, contact Debbie, ext 3812 or email: D.Foy-Everett@sussex.ac.uk . For an extensive listing of funding opportunities see REFUND on the Research Website: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/research or USIS Home Page, under Research.

The Royal Society is inviting applications to its research grants scheme. Research grants of up to £10,000 are available for research projects in the natural sciences including mathematics, engineering science, agricultural and medical research, the scientific aspects of archaeology, geography, experimental psychology and the history of science, technology or medicine. Deadline: 1 April 1999.

The Welcome Trust invites applications for 5 year senior research fellowships in biomedical science to be held in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and India to commence in 2000/2001. Closing date: 26 April 1999.

The ESRC and NERC are funding up to 20 joint interdisciplinary research studentships. The postgraduate research on environmental issues must address the interests of both Councils and combine approaches of both the environmental and social sciences. Deadline: 1 May 1999.

The British Library Research and Innovation Centre has issued a call for research proposals into information retrieval. Proposals in any area of information retrieval will be considered, but the following areas will be particularly welcomed: multimedia and image retrieval and retrieval on the Internet. Deadline: 7 May 1999.

The BBSSC invites research proposals under its Gene Technologies Underpinning Healthcare scheme. Primary research areas are: gene therapy; recombinant protein production; xenograft technology; and development of new models including cell line alternatives and tissue engineering. Deadline: 1 June 1999.

The BBSRC and The Royal Society invite applications for their Industry Fellowship Scheme. The scheme provides opportunities for academic scientists to spend a period of time working in industry and for equivalent industrial employees to spend time in a University. Fellowships are usually of between 6 months to 2 years. Deadline: 4 June 1999.

The British Academy is calling for applications to a series of fellowships and readerships in the humanities. The scheme is aimed at established scholars and are designed to allow award holders to complete research, while relieved of their normal teaching/administrative commitments. Deadline: 31 July 1999.

The MRC annually awards 20-25 Career Establishment Grants to clinical/non-clinical scientists recently appointed to an academic post. The aim is to establish the scientist as an independent principal investigator. No Deadline.
Noticeboard  

**Lectures, Seminars, Colloquia**

**Monday 22 February**  
12.30pm Sussex Continuing Education Research Forum: Adam Roberts and Rosie Spooner, Developing the curriculum through innovative partnerships for employee development. D310.

1.00pm Experimental Psychology: Chris Darwin, Do we attend to a direction or a voice? BLR

4.00pm Sociology and Social Psychology Seminar: Alan Irwin (Brunel), New research directions in the public understanding of science. D310.

4.30pm Neuroscience Seminar: Sergei Korneeve, A Pseudogene regulates neuronal NOS expression through a natural antisense mechanism. BLR.

5.00pm Women's Studies Research-in-Progress Seminar: Kristin Doern, Ragged homes: poverty, drink and the women's temperance movement. D610.

**Tuesday 23 February**  
10.00am Experimental Psychology Colloquium: Lesley Fallowfield (CRC Psychosocial Oncology Group), From psychophysics to psycho-ontology: measuring difficult things. EP4.9.

1.30pm Psychology Research Colloquium: Paula Cooper, Social development in the deaf child. PEV2A1.

2.15pm European Institute Seminar: Charlie Jeffery (Birmingham), Germany and the reshaping of Europe. A71.

4.00pm COGS Seminar: Ralph Brooker (Hampshire Autistic Society), Men thinking badly: why Autism is stretching cognitive science. COGS 5C11.

4.15pm Biochemistry & Genetics and Development Seminar: Nick Lakin (Wellcome-CRC Institute, Cambridge), Biochemical analysis of the AGT gene product ATN and its relative ATR. BLT.

4.30pm Social and Political Thought Seminar: Julian Saurin, The right to food. D630.

5.00pm Media Studies Seminar: Janice Winship, Women outdoors: advertising, controversy and disputing feminism in the 1990s. D710.

5.00pm Social Anthropology Seminar: David Mosse (SOAS), The making and marketing of participatory development: a sceptical note. C219.

5.15pm German Research Colloquium: Kate Storje (London), 'A danger and a veiled attack': translating into Nazi Germany. A155.

**Wednesday 24 February**  
1.00pm IDS Seminar: Heather Joshi (London), Gender and wage inequality in the U.K. Room 221.

2.00pm English Graduate Colloquium: Gretchen Gerzina (Vassar), Bushmen and blackface: Bloomsbury and race. D640.

3.00pm Centre for Optical and Atomic Physics Seminar: Tilman Pfau (Konstanz), TBA. PEV2A2.

4.00pm CMAIA Colloquium: Keith Moffatt (Isaac Newton Institute for Mathematical Sciences), Relaxation under topological constraints. PEV1 1A1.

4.00pm Music Research Seminar: David Osmond-Smith, Dallapiccola and the construction of Italianita. Room 120, Falmer House.

4.30pm Research in the History of Art Seminar: Liz James, Behind the scenes at the museum: Byzantium at the V&A. C219.

**Thursday 25 February**  


4.00pm Geography Research Seminar: Colin Whiteman (Brighton), The headless Thames and other southern British rivers. D340.

4.00pm CPES Colloquium: Roy S Lehrle (Birmingham), Forensics, fakes and failures. Chichester Lecture Theatre.

4.00pm Experimental Psychology Colloquium: David Green, Mental representations and social representations. BLR

5.00pm History Work-in-Progress Seminar: Peter Clarke (Cambridge), Tony Blair and New Labour. A155.

5.00pm Sussex Development Lecture: Richard Wilson, Are 'human rights' a form of Western imperialism? A1.

6.00pm Centre for Statistics and Stochastic Modelling Seminar: Chris Conlorg (KPMG), Forecasting mortgage repossessions: a causal model for mortgage indemnity guarantee (MIG) reserving, Room 314 Watts Building, Moulscoomb site, University of Brighton.

**Friday 26 February**  
2.00pm SPRU Seminar: Simon Collinson (Edinburgh), Developing and deploying knowledge for innovation: Japanese and British firms compared. EDB Lecture Theatre.

4.00pm Applied Mathematics and Numerical Analysis Seminar: John Dold (UMIST), Non-monotonic curvature-dependent propagation. PEV1, Room 2813.

4.00pm Chemical Physics and Materials Seminar: Hazel Cox, Applications of DFT to organometallic synthesis. CHE-3R241 (MS3).

4.00pm Astronomy Centre Seminar: Bernard Carr (QM), TBA. Arundel 401.


**Small Ads**

**FOR SALE**: Nissan Micra L 1.0 1986 (D), 80,000 miles, 2 owners, FSH, VGC, £695. Contact ext 2608 or ebpk@sussex.ac.uk.

**TO LET**: V large attic room in farmhouse at Hamsey nr Lewes. Own bathroom, share kitchen, garden etc w/family. Own transport essential. £55 p/w include bills. Tel. Jane 478361.

**FOR SALE**: Double-fronted Victorian semi-detached house. Fiveways area. 4 b/rooms, 2 bathrooms. Modernised, fully DG, GCH, good-sized garden. £149,000. Contact 271839.

**TO LET**: Large, newly decorated bed/sitting room in private house nr Preston Park. Female n/s preferred. £55 include. Tel. 506384.

**WANTED**: Accommodation for PG female student. Will pay up to £50, Brighton/Hove area. Starting asap, for about a month. Tel 505361 or email c.j.martin@sussex.ac.uk.

**TO LET**: Large attractive townhouse w/character. 6 month let. Hanover area. 3 b/room, patio garden, large attic. £750 pcm. Tel. Miranda/Peter, 705 606.

**FOR SALE**: Tantalising tangerine Austin Mini. Dependable and commendable little car that could take you far, MOT and Tax till October 1999. Good handbrake. The future is bright the future is only £400 ono. Call Jo on ext: 3108.

**FOR SALE**: 1 two seater sofa, VGC, £40. Also car roof rack, 286 lap top computer, dot matrix printer and photographic enlarger. Offers: email richard@cooco.u-net.com or tel 486359 evenings.

**WANTED**: a studio or one-bedroom flat for a visiting scholar from Taiwan. Quiet and convenient location preferred. Start from 1 March for six months. Please email fap30@sussex.ac.uk.

**ACCOMMODATION WANTED**: Admin staff, smoker, + 1 well behaved cat are urgently looking for u/f 1-bedroom or spacious studio flat close to London Rd station. Patio or access to garden desired. Rent: £400 pcm max. Contact Catherine on ext. 2238 or 696319 (eves) or email C Senger@sussex.ac.uk.

**FOR SALE**: Computer workstation/table. Professional quality computer table, with sliding shelves for printer and keyboard with basket. £50 ono. Contact Chris Bradfield, tel ext 2568 or e-mail c.d.bradfield@sussex.ac.uk.

**WANTED**: Part-Time Admin Assistant with Accounts experience for small Biotech company on Sussex campus. 20hrs/week, brief CV to: Genpak Ltd, Sussex Innovation Centre.

**Bulletin**

The Bulletin appears every Friday during term time with copy deadlines the preceding Friday lunchtime. We welcome any suggestions for news, events, letters and small ads from staff and students of the University.

Please contact the Information Office in Sussex House on Ext. 8209 or Email: bulletin@sussex.ac.uk.