
The Clown and Gown: The Significance of Humor of Political and Social Issues in Selected Modern Plays

Assist. Prof. Nahidh Falih Sulaiman (Ph.D)

Department of English/Faculty of Education for Humanities

University of Diyala, Iraq

Email: nahidhum@gmail.com

Abstract

Performers of comedy know well that the power of their performance lies in their awareness of transforming the painful and serious truths into comic relief. The performer who bears the real cost of such mission cares greatly for the meaning of that offset. Through speakable or mime acting, the employer of the slapstick or any similar types of physical comedy comes up with the idea of showing seriousness comically and professionally. Performance of clowning distinctively gets the purpose of inducing hearty laughter and indulges skillfully in the depth of the truth and its climaxing aftermath. This can be achieved when the roles are performed dramatically pretending not desperate while actually they are so disparate of the severe realistic situation. Fundamentally, the clown's task more comic tends to be comic making people smile or laugh. But he/she acts in a proper or particular way to reflect pain and mischief foolishly. Clown's tact and dexterity nip up with the skill of performance and how the clown is clever to perform comedy, magic, voodoo, and tragedy.

The paper's theme sheds light on the traditional meaning of the clown and the updating specific evaluation of the political and social significance of theatrical clowning unlike the classical fool or court jester played during Shakespearean time.. First, the study presents an introduction to the art of clowning staged theatrically and the major types of clowns. The study initiates the modern conceptual analysis of theatrical clowning preceded by a brief introduction about the serious clowning plays such as *The Clown* by the Syrian poet and playwright Muhammad Al-Mayghout, and Bill Irwin's *The Regard of Flight* (1983) and *Largely New York* (1989). Then, the attention is significantly directed to highlight the role of clowns as messengers of political and social themes who intelligently deliver messages through wordless performance discussed in some modern plays such as *Clomadeus* (1991), performed by the imagistic Soviet troupe Ilkhom, and *Come Down From the Mountain John Clown, John Clown* (1993) devised by Barabbas. The paper rounds off its analysis by a brief conclusion.

Key words: Clowning, modern vaudeville, comedy of mischief

1. Introduction

Clowns are those performers characterized by toupee, makeup, wide slacks and outlandishly unfamiliar wearing. They mainly depend on visual performances that include physical movements and slapstick that deliberately based on clumsy actions and humorously embarrassing events. In that sense, clowning is an art that has a necessary closeness to mime and pantomime, yet it differs in the physicality of its performer. It develops a character who might be an actor, a juggler (trampoline), a storyteller, the disguised protagonist, or a puppeteer. And in some cases, the clown is all of these roles. Each of which has a specific part to perform mixing the art of pantomime with the theme play in one hand, and the talents to bring entertainment and laughter on the other hand. Most generally, clowning performance features the play as vaudeville basically for entertainment that combines burlesque comedy, song and dance. History lists the clown's function within comic parody or extreme exaggeration to cover situations either of comedy or mischief. Due to the various definitions and long history of the clown, it is fundamental to give an overview on the major types of the clown.

1.1 Types of Clown

The term 'clown' refers to a performer who plays the fool and certain influential and woven jokes. He does skillfully some tricks for a specific purpose mainly to make people laugh. In fact, the term clown is one of a group of various names that can be included other names such as buffoon, jester, fool, conjurer, mirth maker, tumbler, glee man, mime, actor, harlequin, merry counselor, comic, and puppeteer etc...

Historically speaking, the clown develops a kind of special face that gives authenticity. The clown's face plays a significant means in promoting the actor's essential role. So, through time, the clown develops different types of faces of significant roles and characters. Thus, the main types of clown are

classified at least under four major types; Whiteface, Auguste, Characters, and New Vaudeville (Peacock 19).

The whiteface clown is the oldest type which can be traced back to the 18th century. One of the most known and popular whiteface is Harlequin which is originally known as a comic personality in the Italian theatre. John Ric, an English actor is a famous Harlequin who performed in the early and mid-18th century. The clown gradually replaced the Harlequin performer in the second half of the 18th century. At that time, the nickname “Joey” was a distinguished and well-known clown as derived from the English entertainer Joseph Grimaldi. Some studies refer to the ancient origin of the whiteface following it back to the time of the Greeks and medieval times, “The oldest of all clowns, the Whiteface can be traced back through *commedia dell’arte*, meaning "comedy of the profession"(Britannica) and medieval court jesters to the theatres of ancient Greece, where Comedic actors frequently painted their faces white. So, they could be better seen” (Admin n.pag.). Buffon, jester, or rustic fool; the word clown was introduced to London theatre audience in the early 19th Century. Obviously, clown got popularity quickly over Harlequin, Grimaldi, who appeared in many performances including Harlequin and Mother Goose (1806) (Hoh n.pag.)

The quick spread of the phenomena of the clown performance helped the French audience eagerly to attend clowning shows in Paris where the French performer Jean Gaspard Debureau skillfully captured the imagination of the audience and got their attention. Most diffusely, the French whiteface clown had developed multi images and characters, notably those of certain characteristics such as wearing white makeup, a skullcap, and a white suit and performed as a juggler and mime called Debureau that brought a new trend of calculated mischievousness to Pierrot that bordered on the sinister. To consider the development of the clown from Debureau’s time until recently, Debureau’s technique was largely performed but with some changes took place later to

characterize the clown with sad performances rather than only by mischief-making show. The development of the first clowning type had successfully led to the second type called Auguste which appeared and became popular during the mid-19th century (Peacock 20). The more popular legends about the origin of this type involved an American performer whose name is Tom Belling:

One night in 1864 during a European performance, Belling, an accomplished acrobat and horseback rider, rummaged through a costume trunk, looking for a new comic identity. Dressed in a ragged coat, a tattered wig placed backwards on his head, and a grease-painted red nose, he was mistakenly pushed into the ring by the circus owner. Unfamiliar with his new costume, Belling tripped over his own coattails and fell flat on his face in the ring. The audience shouted “August!” German slang for a stupid, bumbling fool. (Hoh n.pag.)

Thus, Auguste appeared to announce a new type of clown to perform comic episodes. This type stumbles, performs pratfalls, slaps and is slapped. The Auguste’s uniform is classified by remarkable clotting that does not fit, including abnormal length or too short clothes, “trousers which are too long or too short, too light or too baggy; a jacket which is too big or too small; shoes or boots which are often overly long; and a hat” (Peacock 21). Through time, the Auguste routines have changed to be more aggressive, physical and slapstick in nature since their first development “The auguste is the clown who seems to be everything wrong. He trips over himself, interrupts and disturbs the whiteface, or the ringmaster, and often disrupts the activities of the whiteface. There is a usually conflict between the whiteface and the auguste” (Stolzenberg 37).

The type of clown kept in development until the early 20th century. During that time, a third category of characterization developed from a type called Carpet Clown, that performed different performances especially circus acts. They are also called Character Clowns whose main means is adopting different features of the human face. Bald heads, large noses, and strange

haircuts have been exaggerated through its process of professional development. Widely, such kind of performance got its ideal place in American theatre known as hobo or tramp clown (Peacock 19). Among those who cleverly adopted this type was Charlie Chaplin who played the part of the “Little Tramp”. Other famous tramp clown and hobo are Weary Willie, Otto Griebing, and Emmett Kelly who began performing in the 1930s. During the 1950s and 1960s, the spot light focused on Red Skelton whose performances were mainly on television (Packer 140).

It might be considered that New Vaudeville was the other but most popular type of theatrical clowning chiefly in the US in the early 20th century. It was presented as a mixture of acts such as burlesque comedy, song and dance typically without makeup in which the actor tends to relate with the audience rather than just to perform for them. Examples of new vaudeville performers include a group of four musical jugglers called the Flying Karamazov Brothers who “combines juggling, mime, and magic tricks with traditional clowning techniques” (Hoh n.pag.). This type premises to portray the chaos of a mechanized and unfair world, and discusses in a professional approach the paradoxical social and political matters interestingly in a knowledgeable and an insightful way. Bill Irwin, however, is one of the best-known and more successful new Vaudeville clown (Wilmeth 290). He no longer wears clown makeup. Purposely, Irwin performs clashes with modernity, defeated or triumphant, yet politely in performing manner vividly in *The Regard of Flight* (1982), *Largely/New York* (1989), and *Fool Moon* (1993).

Dramatically, the clown elaborates the art of acting the script into the art of improvisation staged with skills of deviating from what is normal, typically in away characterized as high-level intuition. Clowning requires developing the personal sources of how to evaluate the dramatic situation, the human nature, the reaction of the play audience, timing, and the directing techniques. Moreover, it raises a good connection with the audience through amiable actions that display

a friendly and pleasant manner. The clown has to function the physical techniques to be more amicable, agreeable, cordial, good-natured, and easy to get along with the audience's attention. Importantly, the clown must have a good sense of humor and amiability while the skill of entertainment and communication gets effortful mastering. Through that mastering, the action results a homogeneous mixture of wit, suspense, abruptness of unexpected fact or thing, or a shock that the clown is pleasantly surprising the audience. Not only this, staging the clowning character demands a fast shifting between humor and seriousness that develops the audience's response to accept being in the status of happiness and mischief simultaneously. The clown should know that the exaggerated funny show risks the act to effortlessness and no standardization of the clowning purpose. The acumen of the clown should conclude that understanding the inner feeling of the audience may reformulate their satisfaction about performed situations that are probably not persuasive in their nature.

In theatrical clowning, the proper subject matter for a play must be symbolized by either an image or a character that holds the meaning and the purpose of that performance. In this sense, the potential of the clown's spirit must show the capacity to develop the theme into something more desirable and reliable. Hence, the clown visualizes the allegorical mixture between realistic life and the symbols to manifest this reality. The common or colloquial speech that makes up the clown's motion show and the clear message behind the light hearted laughter and comic tragedy of necessity represents a character of very special ability as he/she can create a thoughtful mood or atmosphere.

Theatrical clowning is basically the show that releases the audience's inner desires and expresses life truth comically. It is a physical comedy that needs to improvise an idea through joy and pleasure. It examines the courageous embodiment of the authentic ability in limited time and place. The senses of curiosity and navigation are newly demanded when the theatrical clowning

invites people's courage to act enthusiastically. It is a healthy risk which allows audience to live the childish situation they often long to. So, mostly, the humorous atmosphere of the theatrical clowning brings that deep healing and understanding of much limited beliefs which all hold human inner spaces back. Assumingly, theatrical clown holds a response to the circumstances at hand to share the very foolish side of life. Pleasing is that sort of humor which uses failure as a springboard of strong jump forward. Therefore, the clown struggles to triumph over tribulations and risks to get over the discrepancy.

Theatrical clowning has given its approach the essentiality to technique and intention of how to employ the physical moves to act thematic slapstick and how to estimate the laughter as a brilliant stupidity. Not only that, through physical comedy, clowning transcends language and cultural partitions throughout the absurdity of everyday living. In America, Slava Polunin's famed *Snowshow* and his *Academy of Fools* has celebrated the 15th anniversary *Snowshow*, presented 4000 performances seen by over three millions in more than 30 countries and 120 cities (Peacock 61). Polunin, the Russian Master Clown Legend, the founder of the *Academy of Fools*, features that the most intelligent and sensitive people are behind the life scenes, they experience miseries, yet they turn the unbearable into fantasies. The *Slava's Snowshow* is a poetic spectacle of total agreement of its enchanted and qualified imagination. It presents a capturing foolishness as a genre by its own sense.

1.2 The Classic Models of Theatrical Clowning

Clowns of past eras were seen ostracized wherever they go associated mostly with juggler who are either socially pariahs. In Europe, the general impression about clowns was no more than fools who suffered basically from some physical deformity or mental problems. They were gifted to the landlords because they were clearly recognizable as developmentally disabled people uncared by their families. In courts during 16th century, clowns were given the opportunity to speak freely, particularly in the medieval places were kings and

their retinue used to laugh and enjoy. Hence, actors on stage began to train as fools to comment satirically on king's deeds and their advisers, assistance, or other accompanying figures. Thus, the 'wise fool' could satirize through pantomime the foolish action by very symbolic performance to point out political and social absurdity. In England, during the 16th century king James I employed a jester named Archibald Armstrong that he used to entertain the king with gays, riddles, juggles, songs, tales, and tricks (Fernández 92). For example, the eccentric poet and humanist John Skelton (1460-1529) wrote the play *Magnificence* (1519) that presents how generosity combined with good sense and grandeur, was ideal for a king. In the play, Fancy, the vice who puts on the coat of Folly, is a dwarf. Fancy is dressed as a fool. The two fools, Fancy and Folly, are accompanied by the hawk and the dog. They are addressing and blaming each other:

Folly: Cock's heart, thou liest; I am no hog.

Fancy: here is no man that called thee hog or swine.

Folly: In faith, man, my brain is as good as thine.

Fancy: The devil's turd for thy brain!

Folly: By my sire's soul, I feel no rain.

Fancy: By the mass, I hold you mad.

Folly: Marry; I know thee when thou wast a lad.

Fancy: [to audience] Cock's bones, heard ye ever sic another?

Folly: Yea, a fool the tone and a fool the tother. (*Magnificence* 132)

Robert Armin (c. 1568-1615), an English actor, became a leading comedy actor with the troupe associated with Shakespeare. Through his comedy plays, *The History of Two Maids of More-clacke*, *Foole upon Foole*, *A Nest of Ninnies*, and *The Italian Taylor and his Boy*, Armin managed to alter the function of the clown, fool, in the plays from the rustic serving man comedian to a character of a brilliant ability to act high-comic domesticity (Wiles 143). Armin clowned at the curtain simultaneously the time he played at the Globe. In Armin's plays, the

clown took that part of crossing beyond the texts and even beyond the dramatic company. *The Valiant Welshman* (1615), written by R.A. Gent and attributed to Armin, challenged the idea of categorizing the fool with an ordinary character from the real life. The character of Sir Morion, the Earl's son who was in love with the Fairy Queen, reveals that he is the fool of the play.

In Shakespeare's plays, Armin played as an actor the role of the fool/clown before he set the role of the fool in his play *Fool upon Fool* in 1605 as 'Clonnico del Mondo', the clown of the globe. In 1609, Armin confessed that he had imitated and inspired by the clown part of Dogberry of William Kempe (died 1603), an English actor and dancer who took comic roles in early plays of William Shakespeare (Wiles 144).

The Shakespearian Fool is a recurring character of highly significant part that demonstrates a clever peasant or common of special wit leading and advising people to follow social norms. Those fools of Shakespeare's plays closely attached audience's hearts and attention particularly when these plays were staged on the Globe Theatre and the groundlings, the poor who pay less to stand on the ground before the stage, enjoyed the performance of the fools and jesters. In his *Shakespeare's Clown: Actor and Text in the Elizabethan Playhouse* (2005), David Wiles listed the licensed fools in some of the Elizabethan and Shakespearean plays as follows:

Touchstone/ *As You Like It* (1599): 'the clown' 'the clownish fool out of your father's court' (1-iii-126).

Carlo Buffone/ *Every Man Out of His Humor* (1599): 'a public, scurrilous and profane jester' (in the prefatory character of the persons, 1600 Quarto) 'an impudent common jester' (prol. 357) Ben Johnson.

Feste/ *Twelfth Night* (1600): 'the clown' (in the stage directions, 1623; probably derived from foul papers) 'an allowd fool' (I.v.93) 'the jester... a fool that the Lady Olivia's father took much pleasurein' (II.iv.II).

Lavatch/ *All's Well That Ends Well* (1602): ' My lord that's gone made himself much sport out of him; by his authority he remains here, which he thinks is a patent for his sauciness' (IV.V.61-3).

Thersites/ *Troilus and Cressida* (1602): ‘Achilles hath inveigled his fool from him’ (II.iii.94).

Passarello/ *The Malcontent* (1604): ‘fool to Bilioso’ (dramatis personae in Q3, 1604) ‘he keeps beside me fifteen jesters’ (I.viii.45).

Fool/ *King Lear* (1605): ‘the fool’ (in the stage directions, 1608 and 1623) ‘Your all-licensed fool’ (I.iv.198). (Wiles 144)

Lori M. Culwell in his article “the Role of the Clown in Shakespeare’s Theatre”, emphasizes that the clowning scenes give a good alternative approach to the main theme of the play and send a clear message of the scene until the play reaches its development. Culwell states:

The clowning scenes used in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* are some of the finest examples of the incorporation of the city clown and its ramifications. The function of these scenes is, then, to provide an alternate viewpoint by interrupting the main action of the play and playing specifically to that “mingle mangle”. The clowns used the oral/physical tradition to create diversity and to provide a more complete understanding of the theme by employing a “mingle mangle” of their own. (Culwell n.pag.)

According to Culwell’s point of view, the clown plays the role that equals in power and significance, the role of nobles when laughter is permitted to be a powerful tool with or without language. In Act V, scene I of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, the Gravedigger scene, Ophelia’s grave was dug by two clowns, Clown One and Clown Two. Their digging was accompanied by physical humor and rituals. The scene starts with the two clowns throwing skulls up out of the grave and singing a song. Labeling the Gravedigger scene with ritualism was likely given a distinguished seriousness especially when the two clowns compared themselves to Adam through a Protestant orientation arguing if Ophelia deserves a Christian burial or not:

Clown 1: Ay, marry is’t crowners’ quest law.

Clown 2: Will you ha’ the truth on’t? If this had not been a gentle woman, she should have been buried out of Christian burial.

Clown 1: Why, there thou say'st; and the more pitty that great folk should have countenance in this world to drown or hung themselves more than their even-Christian. Come my spade! There is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners, ditchers and grave-makers: they hold up Adam's profession.

Clown 2: was he a gentleman?

Clown 1: ...what, art a heathen? ...the scripture syas Adam digged. (*Hamlet* Act V, scene i)

Keeping dwarfs or dwarf-semi-like fool, was Queen Elizabeth's manner of the sixteenth-century courts habit. Geoffrey Whitney in his *Choice of Emblems* (1586) highlighted the traditional images of the dramatic fool during Elizabethan's reign. "The first is the idiot in motley wearing the costume emblematic of folly; the second is sub-human of child-like figure, a grotesque" (Wiles 150):

Promote the fool, his folly doth appeare,

And is a shame to them, that make him clime:

Whose faultes, before coulde not bee seene so cleare,

For lowe estate did shadowe euery crime:

But set him vp, his folly soone is harde,

Then keepe him doune, let wise men bee prefer'de. (Whitney qtd.in Wiles 150)

In plays like those of Whitney's, the clowns serve as the speaking tongue of the playwright that he is repeatedly pointing to unusual happenings in the courts or the tiny mirror of England life. Thus, the significance of the 'fool' is no longer the one who brings entertainment solely. In that sense, the clown emerges to dominate the stage whenever he appears. For dramaturgical reason, the clown's role is constructed due to the domination of the plot theme that attributes its importance to the physical balance of the 'fool'.

2. Modern Conceptual Analysis of Theatrical Clowning

In recognition of their own foolishness and predicament, the theatrical clowning audiences bring their attention very close into the subject matter

presented on stage. The more likely the theme performed starts to work positively in the audience's imagination and concern regardless a thought of making fools of themselves, and yet watching a wonderful uplifting show and art that can move them to places beyond their line limits. More importantly, theatrical clowning emphasizes the relationship between the clown and the audience. However, the show material is developed by conceptualization and improvisation particularly when the slapstick gathers a collective theatrical experience of himself and laughter.

2.1 Serious Clowning Play

In terms of serious situation themes, the contemporary thinking and practical application to the up-to-date theatre, the ultimate focus is on the work themes that are mostly listed within political and social contexts. Performing the social or cultural issues influentially builds a mature relationship between society and art through barrowing the high-rank qualities of the traditional theatrical examples. Clowning the post-modern political and social structure needs professional backgrounds displayed by perfectly understandable and sympathetic clown's trait.

Efficiently, serious clowning drama vitally and strongly manages drama-therapy, psychodrama, pantomime, or mime in that each of which is performed professionally by a clown. From therapeutic point of view, a clown presents a work that has a therapeutic effect. The clown's performance drives to work on the audience's imagination and inspiration to fight failure and to discover themselves started from the context of child development into late stages of adulthood. As a mediator, the clown defines life approaches of adjustment, alternation, achievement of fit desires and self-sufficiency. Symbolically, the clown clearly shows the difference between real and imagined hopes with a possibility that fictitious imagination is presented into reality as it is called by Philip Malrieu as "self-directed hallucination". Therapeutically, the clown brings that imagination or semi-like-reality into a space overwhelmed by

possibility. In that sense, Freud pinned his understanding of imagination with children's play confirming that when a child plays, he/she does not only create action, but also imagines. Freud states that "It is clear that in their play, children repeat everything that has made a great impression on them in real life, and that in doing so they abreact the strength of the impression and,...make themselves master of the situation... all their play is influenced by a wish that dominates them the whole time-the wish to be grown-up and to be able to do what grown up people do. (Freud 10-11)

Donald Woods Winnicott (1896-1971), an English psychoanalyst built much of Freud's understanding of children's play and linked it to clowning action emphasizing that playing is acting which is a sort of communication with the self and with others depending then mainly on the child's ability to imagine (53). Thus, through a clear reference to a child's play and imagination, the imagination on stage that turns into action by the clown is typically appropriate for imagination to stimulate the personal development as a possible approach of a therapy treatment. In this sense, clowning expression took other styles on thematic stage rather than jesting or humor.

The duality of the personal dynamic process and changing the ground of the play switching from laughter to seriousness invited the audience not only to ridicule the comic scene of the clown, but also to appreciate the clown's touching sense of the very tragic reality that other people could hardly reveal. The Syrian poet and playwright Muhammad Al-Mayghout (1934-2006) spotted his writing of dark-comedy on people living in poverty and deprivation in Damascus. His first play produced on stage, *The Clown* (1974) followed a daring style of criticizing the social and political conditions in Syria. Historically, the play incarnates the conqueror of Andalusia in Spain Tareq Bin Ziad but in our times figuring him as not that hero of the past but the one who did atrocities inflicted upon him and how he was encountered by hatred while he roams in Damascus (Ismat 161). Al-Maghout shared with his audience and

readers the character of the (aragoz) to perform alone on the stage and to comment satirically on the public affairs accompanied with comedy. The satirical mood gave Al-Maghout a new color and dimension to his works before *The Clown* when he wrote *The Hunchback Bird* (1967), a play with a new vision of life that replaces the relief by the complicated social and political structure of Arab world. *The Clown* reveals the status of Arab world of twenty-first century in comparison to the legendary historical characters of the past.

In “The Arab World through the eyes of a clown”, Thoraia Abou Bakr shows that the Utopia Theatre in El Sawy Culture Wheel in Egypt had adapted Al-Maghout’s *The Clown* holding the same title but of 2013 setting. The play opens with two clowns who perform publically before a traditional coffee shop. They are rejected by three types of Egyptian audience; the educated who opposes any uncivilized figures, the wailing who laments everything, and those who are indifferent. Abou Bakr, in her above article, comments that the clown of this new adaptation play transforms his humor into defensive, violent, and unwilling one rejecting to compromise. As the protagonist of the play, the clown moved back to the time of Abd Al-Rahman Walid El Mikaati, the founder of a Muslim dynasty in Iberia, formerly known as Al-Andalus. The Clown could not manage to convince any of that historical character and his belonging to a different time. However, the clown shows his interest to highlight the Arab new changes and their upheavals that soon fall down with destruction and lost ancient cities.

When the word ‘clown’ is heard, it would immediately bring into mind the painted face of red nose, floppy shoes, sided-dragged painted mouth, and flashing colorful gown. Although there is a troubling distinction between ‘clown’ and ‘fool’, yet a clown goes deep in performing rational and argumentative themes. The clown is described as those people who fill the gaps of a society if not the gaps themselves. They are witty enough to critique and to manipulate this criticism. He is not that beaten or chased character for his

stupidity, but rather he is one among the heroes of plays who speaks prose and verse brilliantly. The clown issues the verbal stream out of improvisation with creative physical representations. His marginality is relevant to his superiority but not stupidity. Accurately, the clown carries the subject matter in that he crystalizes the argumentative topic and mitigates the climax tension. Supposedly, the clown helps the tragic significance to become easy to argue and go through. Thus, in modern theatre, the integration of the clown position works for a clear signification to convey the play theme. As a necessarily supportive role, the modern stage is boosted by the clown role as a means of communication technology of blood and flesh assistance. Regardless of the play theme of political or social concerns, the clown role essentially formalizes the basic unit of the text. When the play has malleable social key themes and well-written script, the clown then brings the motivating question of high possibility to perform untextually. Through the facial expressions, he comes similar to grotesque that collectively converts the dramatic topic into indeed main attraction. Clowning, thus, represents the improvisatory feature of the situation that he could do so deeply from within his own intellectuality.

Within the necessities of the modern theatrical clowning, the fulcrum of the play successful performance and theme direct toward the dramatic untextuality through challenging the text strength by a creative and maximum clown's performance. So, the idea that theatre is basically scriptive was faced by no priority. The freestanding of the clown embodies the paradigm of theatre. He gradually breaks his identity a part to build that fundamental category of the theatrical clowning development. Hence, 'clowning is the point of contact between the successful meaning of the play script and author, and the self-reference of the creative performance of the clown' (Preiss 15).

Bill Irwin (1950-), an American actor, entertainer, playwright, and best known among his pioneers as New Vaudeville, represents the postmodern clown who is marked by his innovative use of his clown skills to create exciting visual

metaphors for the broader actions and emotions of a play (Bauham 179). Irwin satirizes the postmodern theatre and creatively functions fun to elaborate the meaning of modern general faults. He did that both in terms of physical comedy and verbal gags.

Irwin staged his Obie winning work *The Regard of Flight* (1983) where he clowned the serious thoughts about someone's dreams and how these dreams may fly unless they are pinned down in real tries. Hence, he gives his title issue some thoughts as connecting past with the present to live happily the future. He lucidly extracts from the title that "clown is OK, but Bagatelles"? Irwin's use of postmodernism was his attempt to get a laugh especially before his dancing and playing before his audience. To Irwin, postmodernism is that show he satirically but interestingly argues for some sort of change. He affirms that such a term needs a satirical physical expression and talents that no one could perform but mime-clown acting. In an interview with him, Irwin expresses his view on the importance of physical expression as a means of theatrical performance when he was asked how both the mime and clown arts differ from that of the actor:

I think it's important to see the performers' job as reaching the audience... The craft of the speaking actor and the actor whose language is exclusively the language of the body are different, but only in approach... Mime or clown festivals...can be wonderful but can sometimes leave one uncomfortable if it feels that jargon barriers are being put up that people than feel forced to defend. (Lust 194)

The double bill entitled *The Regard of Flight* and *The Clown Bagatelles* has implied songs, dances, physical humor, parodies, and seriousness. In this sense, *The Regard of Flight* explores the conventions of traditional theatre though there is a real need for other alternative. Irwin makes of his awakening after a deep sleeping as a ring bells to face an actor's nightmare through a direct confronting with the play audience by using expressive physical expressions. He frequently throws realism to audiences' recognition as if he confronts barely his

life that he repeatedly appears sucked off stage by a giant vacuum. He returns to stress that “performance in the new theatre is not a matter of devices, performance is an aspect of prophecy” (Lust 194), and the change costume of the actor is the factual change in theatre.

The clown’s genius or stupidity is recognized beyond the idea of having a special trait. It is determined by the dramatic flow of the play. Thus, his defiance as being a character of normal behavior is professionally connected with his high talented ability to perform stupidity and foolishness.

2.2 Bill Irwin’s *The Largely New York*

The Largely New York (1989), written and directed by Bill Irwin, has cleverly met with the needs of modern man. Irwin connects the past with the present and he makes from the present an apt self-readiness to whatever may come and change. Irwin creates a new motivation to figure out the important technologies of modern generations such as the way to operate VCRs. In this sense, postmodern man deservedly evaluates television and other technologies of entertainment as fresh life. Being funny without being smart that is a good-natured Everyman “The post-Modern Hooper”, the clown.

In *The Largely New York*, the characters play those particular cultural and societal themes in a complete wordless performance. They could get what sounds like the normality of post modernism and the dispensing of recent past. Along the way, the good-natured Everyman of the clown appearance encounters a variety of characters they inhabit the New York City. 75-minute adventure was enough for the clown to discover what looks like new categorizing environment and living classes. A pretty modern dancer, two breakdancing experts, a video production crew, and a group of academics, and other New York figures reacted to the clown by no dialogue actions as he exchanges the funny mood with them through a remote control device that he carries.

Metaphorically, Irwin makes of that technological device a human's tongue to speak and ask to learn, and a mind to think intelligently in time when the romantic clown's life line does better less to humanity than science and technology. Michael Kuchwara in his article 'Largely New York', starring Bill Irwin, opens on Broadway has examined how the clown of that big city has been interrupted by the new modern moods. Albeit he was helped by the dancing friends and an orange vacuum cleaner. The clown finally could move quickly with a rushing sound out of the tube into his battered old actors' trunk.

The dancing of Irwin pleasantly fills the audiences' hearts with acceptable reactions when the clown stands before the screen image looking at the flashing light changed by the remote control. Then, he is rebuked because of his excitement. Another time, he is annoyingly faced by the audiences' disapproval called the Dean for the latter thinks that the clown's foolishness has increased the world default and retardation. To the clown, the remote control is both the fear and courage of the postmodern human's concerns in that he hilariously goes with the two contrast senses. Moreover, the raising and lowering curtain leaves the show with a questionable meaning of life of that desirable innovation or the nostalgic tradition. Therefore, the clown passes by a belief that he is seduced by technology and firmly convinced that human element manages over the power of remote control. In the New York Magazine, the article published under the title "... In Largely New York, we get largely old Bill Irwin, which is a good thing. Tina Howe's Zanzibar is forced and formulaic..." published in 15 May 1989, p.124, Irwin embraces the slight innovation that turns life upside down either eagerly or tragically (New York Magazine).

Of the best possible sense, Irwin shifts with his clowning image the job of humoring the audience and entertaining them into a serious cultural topic in which the show appropriately includes elements that seem belonged to people's interests and current concerns. The play hits the deep cultural and social ideologies of postmodernism. It narrows the postmodernist into a corner that he

either criticizes the society that dumped all his aesthetic trash on him, or he starts his footsteps attitude toward innovative technology. Nevertheless, the show was about the clown's misadventures in electronic wonder land (Siegel 299). He is an outsider of misfit postmodern qualities who has many doubts to have a place in the unknowing life trial. Socially and culturally, the clown's adventures may fail down into inability to communicate successfully unless the remote control overcomes his emotional and mental simplicity. Dario Fo (1926-2016), an Italian actor, playwright, comedian, theatre director, stage designer, and political campaigner strongly claimed that the political message sent by the clown is influential and expressive. To Fo, a clown is the one who mirrors the struggle between classes and the tool that illustrates the nature of the unbalanced scales in society. Fo states:

Clowns, like minstrels and 'comics', always deal with the same problem-hunger, be it hunger for food, for sex, or even for dignity, for identity, for power. The problem they invariably pose is – who's in command, who's the boss? In the world of clowns there are two alternatives: to be dominated, and then we have the eternal underdog, the victim, as in the *commedia dell'Arte*, or else to dominate, which gives us the boss, the white clown or Louis, ... He is in charge of the game, he gives the orders, he issues the insults, he makes and unmakes at will. (Fo 172)

The special style of theatrical clowning is seen by the Nobel Prize for Literature Winner Dario Fo as the situation and the type of show played by clowns. To Fo, the real successful performance of the clown happens when the voice sounds like the grotesque deforms and the expressions are funny but deep, and the signification of the bright exaggerated facial make-up looks necessary. In many situational staging issues, the absolute silence is an ultimate power to hit the wrongness. In modern theatre, the clown's defiance is not how to bring humor or to criticize the retinue or the royal court of Shakespeare's time, but it is the survival itself and its complementary concepts of meaning such as dignity, self-respect, pride, identity, and other big terms that modernism and postmodernism chose to destroy and fade them away.

3. The Clown: A Messenger of the Political Theme

Postmodern theatre has brought the revolution of aesthetic concepts by clowns to the stage (McManus 17). Therefore, the clown of the time is evaluated as a social innovative theatrical tool comes as a reminder of morals and ethics and as a psychological relief and a therapist who is ranked as no less in value than a protagonist. Studying the modern dramatic performances in which the clown is the means for more conceptual powers presented on stage can be looked at as a fundamental means for understanding the deep and precise themes and purposes.

Clomadeus is a clown political drama staged on June 1991 in Philadelphia. It was performed by the imagistic Soviet troupe, Ilkhom, which deals with topics mostly related to human self-value when vulnerably treated well. It is about the dehumanization of oppressed people. *Clomadeus* (1988) is about the confrontation with reality. It is not something that comes easily in that many issues are not being addressed yet. The four clowns disappointedly confront the real matters of people who were deceived by ideologies.

The experimental theatre company from the Soviet Union, Ilkhom, celebrated the wordless drama or a mixture of folk genres. Ilkhom came to demonstrate a new tendency to stage familiar plays founded by Mark Weil in 1976 in Uzbekistan and to welcome young playwrights that strikingly consider the political dramatized issues as their devoted path. It is important to frame Ilkhom with conceptualizing and historizing experiences (Kasimova 19). As the 'Palace of Youth', the place was marked as the central committee of youth of Uzbekistan and the youth section of the Theatre Society of Uzbekistan. Ilkhom was ranked as the place of hybridity experiences of cultural form. It changed its focus to reflect the political issues particularly in the late 1980s when Ilkhom troupe employed clownery key topics to lampoon political parties in Russia.

Moreover, importantly, Ilkhom shows powerfully breaking into headings of societal changes colored by ragtime and clowning elements that nearly come similar to grotesque. Thus, Weil authorized the idea of clowns as “Holy Fools” who were not circled as suspected to be Weil’s means of leading steps and thoughts for others, ascending the stage with no suspected presence and pointing to as the philosophers of the serious clownery theatre (Wiles 144).

Through establishing Ilkhom, the theatre became one of the first professional theatres which took its uniqueness and peculiarity from its remarkable serious issues mostly related to human nature, sufferings, life challenges, and political unattainable promises. It created harmonious well-exchange unspeakable actions of an organized ensemble. It centralized the improvisation of ad-lib as much and as often as directed. Ilkhom actors as well as artists, musicians, and directors follow the improvised manner with intellectuality to perform with an apt ad-lib. The playwrights of Ilkhom were described as the new-wave playwrights who followed best ways of self-expression of pantomimic show (Sengupta 126). The social and political conditions of the former USSR, especially during 1985-1990, had turned Ilkhom concerns from traditional topics, not literary pieces, into wordless expressive performance through metaphor and clownery confrontation. The theatre was getting its fame, albeit slowly, but the results were mixed with success. The playwright of Ilkhom made sense to their audience that the turned-direction political promises would be gotten out when they are unmasked.

In *Clomadeus*, setting is an important device adopted by the playwright. Part of the setting, the evening atmosphere takes a large space, tools of less or maybe no life are placed on stage in such as a coffin-shaped window in addition to the game of spin –the- bottle. In that game, the monster stalked a terrified member of the audience. In a dehumanized manner, the reluctant man has to cross over a rope on the floor, though he is egged on by others, but still that reluctance weakens his mobility to behave normally (Siegel 183). Acting

Clomdeus by four men with miming throughout the scenes with no uttered words have pointed indirectly the expressive content that wears the political gown context. Though the play is wordless, yet few words are expressively uttered by Kamariddin Artikov: “What is there to say, when you have nothing to say, when everyone is so tired of talking?!”(*Clomdeus*).

The title *Clomadeus* is mixed hormonal names of ‘clown’ and ‘Amadeus’ (allusive to Mozart, whose music accompanied the show). It enriches the audience’s interest to realize the implicit meaning of the clowns’ pantomime. The opening uttered statement of the play elaborates a reaction to the fact that glasnost “opened Pandora” box giving an opportunity to people to speak and deal with what was considered in the past decades as taboo. The opening scene of that first and last statement represents the breaking down of roles when people were horrified and mocked by politics of their time. So, their pantomime show gives the clowns of *Clomadeus* the push that the comprehensible meaning of living in failure and pain is the way to leave a lot to be discovered and appreciated.

Clomadeus is full of allegorical scenes and behavioral style which is ridiculous but amusing. Through buffoonery, the clown keeps going in waiting for food rations by long-line standing of nothing to oppose of a blind obedience to a food giver. Nancy Goldner asserts in her article “Baliese Clowns at MTI Festival, that vacuum is the real place of people who live in living theatre; ... pervading the seriocomic tenor of *Clomadeus* was a sense of actors living in a vacuum, under the threat of annihilation by another, larger vacuum” (Goldner n.pag.). The clowns with repeated and exchanged scoped role either through sequent new entrance or through focal laughing moves have the opportunity to make an influential impact on the audience and importantly draw a general and specific line for the major themes that masterly do the action by themselves or comments on the actions of the protagonists. Thus, in *Clomadeus*, the clowns made of their visual humor tool to comment on the banned political thoughts

and social changes. Cleverly, their pantomime adds more difficulties to depict ideas and reality about the themes of the play, yet it proves how the major one is demonstrated by physical humor and seriousness.

Ilkhom was plunged into a specific connection of mingled structure of confusion and a feeling of intense excitement and happiness. The euphoric and elated sense contextually is penetrated into another sense of lacking understanding and certainly when the play pins the weak points of the former Soviet Union reality during 1990s. For example, Gulaq labor camps praise Mikhail Gorbachev's policy and practice of restricting and reforming the economic and political system, affirming that his perestroika did its economic and political goals especially after the cold war, while Brezhnev's stagnation was condemned as it reacted astonishingly to anti-Semitism. The hot topics of *Clomadeus* were guaranteed for performance due to the fact that these topics took place in the recent past when they were considered taboo. Clowning the Perestroika gives its audience another opportunity to realize the empty shell of that ideological approach the regime followed and the faked confidence people were promised by.

The *Clomadeus* stage distributed its performance into various forms of expressions such as parables, jokes, allegorical situations, and grotesquely buffoonery, all done by clowning figuration to finalize the show by spelling the Russian alphabet that each of which represents a word. For example, the letter 'P' stands for Perestroika, while 'G' for Glasnost which creatively exhilarates the audience's vitalizing thinking for connecting and concluding. The four clowns / actors; a bully, a crybaby, an innocent, and a refined cynic who is supposed to be clever, perform through miming in hopeless long line for food rations as well as they portray the status of common people of the Uzbek SSR and of the major class of the union republics of the 1980s (qtd. in Kasimova 42).

American press gave its indication about the play its theme when *Clomadeus* was performed for the first time on Ilkhom: "...pervading the

seriocomic tenor of *Clomadeus* was a sense of actors living in a vacuum, under the threat of annihilation by another, larger vacuum. Is this air of desolation an inevitable response to – and commentary on – life in the Soviet Union? Perhaps” (Goldner n.pag.).

Comedy also comes to make differences in politics and social changes. It may go deep to upgrade the simple opposition into revolutionary thoughts. While political dignity stands to stop insults to people lives. The other additional changes for “ridiculous power” adopt some key demands which prioritize the empowering of recovery and reformation through jokes and clowning. The social welfare cannot be judged separable from the political dignity especially when faults are veiled by deceitful reforms. Hence, it is so difficult as well as heartwarming to see someone trying to implant a smile on one’s face and encouraging vibes around while some fatal political issues cover the ground of the land living. So, such issues send messages and spread awareness through the performance of clowns. Their acts are grounded on deep levels of introspective thinking inspired by a political failure, not only provide comic relief to people in hardships, but also to demonstrate a form of reforming zenith.

One of the best examples that come to mind of the political clowning is what Charlie Chaplin did in the movie *Great Dictator* (1940), when he presented the similar line between the dictator Adolf Hitler, and a clown. Figuratively, the reincarnation of Hitler by the clown (Charlie Chaplin) conjures a huge amount of feeling to represent the political situation mixing of ‘joyful countless death’ and inhumanity. In her article “On Clowns: The Dictator and the Artist-notes to a Text by Fellini”, Norman Manea believes that Chaplin mimics madness until his naivety and playfulness slip into uncontrollable ugliness. He becomes the mask of dictator while simultaneously relies the actor beneath, convulsing in the seduction of power.

The hundred hours between the birth of Charlie Chaplin and Adolf Hitler, both born on April 1889, fascinated Chaplin to clown Hitler the dictator with the

famous scene when Chaplin in a frenzy of triumph throws a balloon in an indication for juggling the world. Thus, the clowning of politics of Hitler and his schizophrenic controlling and fighting manner brought, not only to Chaplin's thinking, but to the globe that Hitler is a Ref.?

In terms of setting things right, clowning politics strongly hits the spot and perfectly, or nearly so, declare the thoughts of approximating in mastering humor codes. To approach the fact or the real political notion, a clown comes to joke; or rather to be a joke. Due to a physical and spiritual wisdom of clown's performance, the opposed codes of political concerns manipulate the language and the body as well. For social and political ironies, a "clown slaps and he gets slapped" (Lee n.pag.). This sense of dual mirror of significant performance has given the clown a huge social space, and no less artistic importance, to celebrate ideologically the reforms.

The Barabbas Theatre Company emerged in early 1990s in Ireland that grouped the plays depending mainly on the body and mime. Raymond Keane, devoted to mime, Veronica Caburn, who has a background in clowning, and Miel Murfi who trained at the Ecole Jacques Lecoq, started to mature their grouping works in 1993 to establish theatre of clown in an originaive work entitled *Come Down From the Mountain, John Clown*. The play was performed in wordless (no dialogue) show that targets Ireland of the 1990s. Of noticeable political and social dimensions, the play zooms on the identical peculiarities of Irish life. Through the clown's performance, a certain presage has presented to warn the way Ireland is going to.

The play follows the lives of Mikel clown, Veronica clown, and Raymond clown. All have found necessities to search the critical acclaim of the social and political facts of the path way of Irish society. The three clown characters display the emotional truth of self-consciousness in one hand, and the realism that is exposed throughout Ireland history and tradition on the other hand. The

'non-speaking' actors direct their silent expressions to audience asking them to think, consider, criticize, argue, and oppose.

As a clowning group, it emerges to figure a triumph from the very depth of Dublin that zealously highlights the national identity. Thus, such a highly stylized clowning performance of non-speaking actors forms the image of Dubliners as those struggling marks of the city. So, from 1990s and on, the Irish Theatre of clown increased the politicization of performance through a collaborative process. Accordingly, the clown's job was not individual, but was an actor-audience collaboration and understanding. It was the replacement of the audience's laughter with a full awareness of Irish picture stayed through a sense of reality.

Conclusion

Everything on theatrical clowning comes from the self. The task of the red nose clown though is hilarious, yet its comic approach serves a societal function in indigenous communities. The clowns expose the political concerns and deal with topics that ordinary people and actors think they cannot do personally and professionally. On stage, the main story is that of the clown as he provides an access to the main event or he clarifies the foggy reality when chaos is unavoidable. The clown covers the entertaining ground as well as social and political. Clown's performance means much-needed contributions. The clown theorizes humor as a concept that can be usefully applied to encourage and create new performing style.

Though the clown is given a situational ability to be one of the main roles in a play, yet the otherness of him/her accounts for the status of being freakish or physical or psychological problem. His/her difference is importantly dealt with by the playwright and the audience as well. That difference authorizes him a license to tackle the social issues and politics metaphorically in time when normal actors or non-clowns are underprivileged to act and speak. In this sense,

the modern critics enthusiastically claim that the clown is the voice for a reactionary and oppressed ethos and the image of the unprivileged common people.

المهراج والثوب:

أهمية الفكاهة في القضايا السياسية والاجتماعية في مسرحيات حديثة مختارة

الكلمات المفتاحية: التهريج ، المسرح الهزلي الحديث ، كوميديا الألم

أ.م.د. ناهض فالح سليمان

قسم اللغة الانكليزية

جامعة ديالى/كلية التربية للعلوم الانسانية

Email: nahidhum@gmail.com

الملخص

يَعْرِفُ جَيِّدًا فنانو الكوميديا أنّ قوّة أدائهم تكمن في وعيهم بتحويل الحقائق المؤلمة والخطيرة إلى راحة كوميديّة من خلال ادراكهم العالي لاهمية عروضهم المسرحية، فمن خلال الأداء الإيمائي، أو أي نوع مماثل للكوميديا الجسدية التي يقوم بها المهراج بشكل مميز مؤديًا الى اثاره الضحك والانغماس بمهارة في عمق الحقيقة وما بعدها. من هنا يمكن القول : إنّ المؤدي المسرحي (المهراج) يأتي بفكرة اظهار الجدية بشكل هزلي ومهني جزءا من مهارته الفنيّة التي يتقمصها.

يُعدُّ فن التهريج من الفنون المسرحيّة المميّزة التي تحتاج إلى قدرات مهمة في الاداء بمختلف جوانبه حيث يمكن تحقيق الهدف من التهريج عندما يتم أداء الشخصيات بشكل كبير من خلال التظاهر بانهم ليسوا يائسين بينما هم في الواقع كذلك، ومن هنا عمل المهراج بشكل أساسي كي يكون من الصعوبة في مكان أن لا يصل إلى المغزى المرجو من الأداء مما يترك تساؤلا عن نقاط الضعف سواء في الأداء أو في النص !. ولغرض تجنب حصول ذلك، يذهب المهراج الى عمق القضية المؤلمة بطريقة هزليّة مميّزة ليظهر الجانب الكوميدي، والبعد التراجيدي على خشبة المسرح.

تسلط الدراسة الحالية الضوء على المعنى التقليدي للمهراج ، ودوره في العصور الماضية في المسرح الشكسبيرري، والتحويلات التي طرأت على اهمية دوره في تقييم الجانب السياسي والاجتماعي.

تهتم الدراسة بالجانب التاريخي لفن التهريج ، و انواع المهرج ودوره التاريخي ، والفني بوصفه مؤديا مسرحيًا في التواصل مع المشاهدين. أيضا تعنى الدراسة في تقديم فن التهريج الحديث من خلال تسليط الضوء على مسرحية (المهرج) التي مثلت على المسرح عام ١٩٦٠ وطبعت عام ١٩٩٨ للشاعر والكاتب المسرحي السوري محمد الماغوط، فضلا عن مسرحيتي (ما يتعلق بالرحلة) ١٩٨٣ و (نيورك الكبيرة) ١٩٨٩ للكاتب المسرحي بيل ارون. تتناول الدراسة دور المهرج في تقديم بعض الرسائل الاجتماعية والسياسية بمهنية عالية وهذا سيتم دراسته في مسرحيات حديثة كمرحبة (كلوماديوس) ١٩٩١ و (جون كلاون انحرمن الجبل) ١٩٩٣.

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