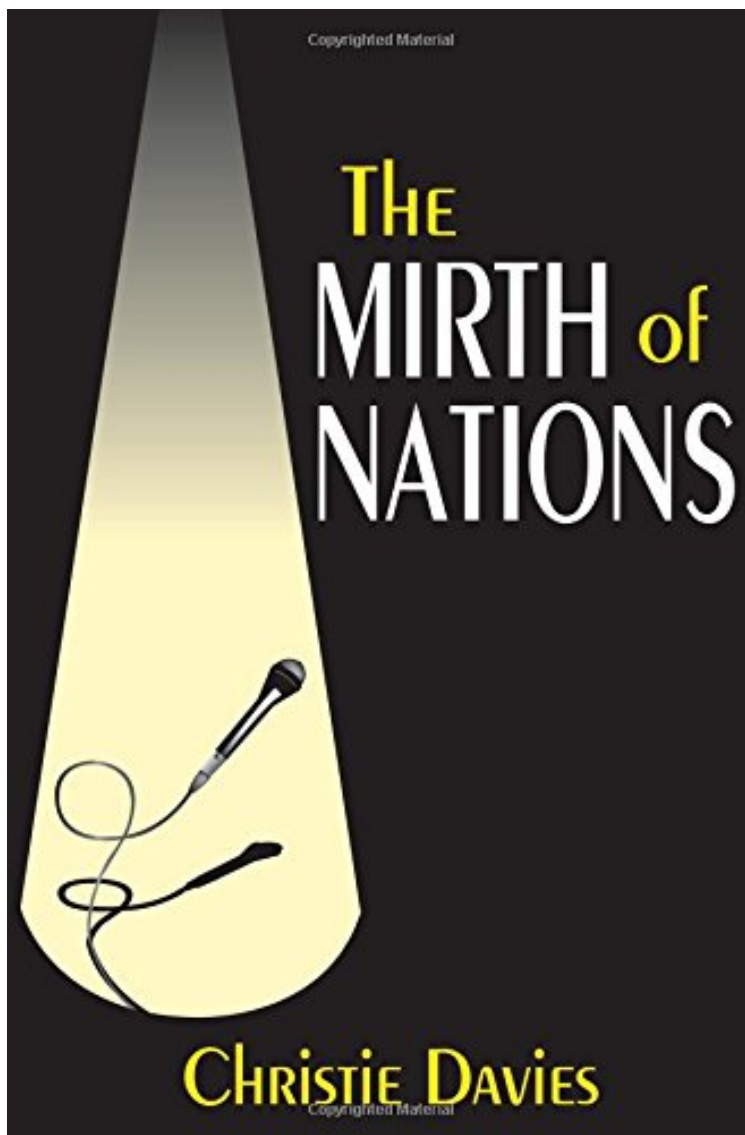


The Mirth of Nations

From Brand: Transaction Publishers

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#4301855 in Books Transaction Publishers 2010-01-17Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.02 x .56 x 5.981,
.79 #File Name: 141281457X263 pages | File size: 37.Mb

From Brand: Transaction Publishers : The Mirth of Nations before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Mirth of Nations:

The Mirth of Nations is a social and historical study of jokes told in the principal English-speaking countries. It is based on use of archives and other primary sources, including old and rare joke books. Davies makes detailed

comparisons between the humor of specific pairs of nations and ethnic and regional groups. In this way, he achieves an appreciation of the unique characteristics of the humor of each nation or group. A tightly argued book, *The Mirth of Nations* uses the comparative method to undermine existing theories of humor, which are rooted in notions of hostility, conflict, and superiority, and derive ultimately from Hobbes and Freud. Instead Davies argues that humor merely plays with aggression and with rule-breaking, and that the form this play takes is determined by social structures and intellectual traditions. It is not related to actual conflicts between groups. In particular, Davies convincingly argues that Jewish humor and jokes are neither uniquely nor overwhelmingly self-mocking as many writers since Freud have suggested. Rather Jewish jokes, like Scottish humor and jokes are the product of a strong cultural tradition of analytical thinking and intelligent self-awareness. The volume shows that the forty-year popularity of the Polish joke cycle in America was not a product of any special negative feeling towards Poles. Jokes are not serious and are not a form of determined aggression against others or against one's own group. *The Mirth of Nations* is readable as well as revisionist. It is written with great clarity and puts forward difficult and complex arguments without jargon in an accessible manner. Its rich use of examples of all kinds of humor entertains the reader, who will enjoy a great variety of jokes while being enlightened by the author's careful explanations of why particular sets of jokes exist and are immensely popular. The book will appeal to general readers as well as those in cultural studies.

"*The Mirth of Nations* is a must for humor scholars. It is truly interdisciplinary: It makes use of insights of linguistics in order to answer questions posed within sociology and humor studies. It is truly scholarly, unbiased and non-ideological." "... a pleasure to read, the style is lucid, and the voice of the author is unmistakable and strong; the repetition of related points in many parts of the book only serves to strengthen overall argument. What is striking is the joy with which Davies refutes apparently false claims, expressing his surprise at the fact that their proponents did not bother to look for arguments to support their theses. The true value of the study thus consists in the power of its argument, which is derived from the thorough archive research and the intellectual honesty of the author, who allows the picture of ethnic joking to be complex and does not cover up difficult issues." --Humor "Davies... is a renaissance man who moves effortlessly across disciplinary boundaries and has made particularly original contributions in the area of religion, the military, social control, crime, and penology. He is... a sceptic about the taken-for-granted and someone with a mordant tongue and pen for identifying the spurious and unexamined behind the facade of 'the obvious'." --*Journal of Contemporary Religion* "The importance of *The Mirth of Nations* is that it takes jokes back from the theorists and returns them to the comedians. And that's all of us." --*The New Criterion* "Christie Davies [is] the leading authority on comparative ethnic humor..." --*American Journal of Sociology* "The demon that drives Davis to such extraordinary lengths is a determination to slay all those apostles of political correctness who regard jokes about religious and ethnic minorities as a likely cause of prejudice, hostility and even aggression towards such groups. There is, he argues, a dangerous circularity about this conventional liberal view. Davies reckons that we can get off this roundabout, only by looking carefully at the relationship between two sets of "social facts": the patterns of actual jokes and the social and cultural setting within which they occur. Consider American jokes about Poles." --*The Times Higher Education Supplement* About the Author Christie Davies is professor of sociology at the University of Reading, England. He has been a visiting lecturer in India, Poland, and the United States, and has taught in Australia. He is the author of books on criminology, the sociology of morality, censorship and humor, and his work has been published as book chapters or in journals worldwide. These works include *Wrongful Imprisonment*, *The Strange Death of Moral Britain*, and *The Corporation under Siege*.